

# How is Identity Formed in Animated Film, through Representations of Self, Difference, Culture and Place?

PhD by Published Work

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## Details of the work included in this PhD

### **Monograph**

- *Identity in Animation: A journey into Self, Difference, Culture and the Body* (Routledge, 2017)

### **Journal Article**

- ‘Rethinking the Rabbit – Revolution, Identity and Connection in Looney Tunes’, *Society of Animation Studies Journal*, 2016, Volume 11

### **Book Chapters**

- ‘Mirrors and Shadows: Duality, Illusion and the Divided Self in Toy Story’ in S. Smith, N. Brown, S. Summers (eds.) *Toy Story: How Pixar Reinvented the Animated Feature* (New York, Bloomsbury, 2018)
- ‘Voice and Violence: The Animated Child in Post-9/11 Disney and Pixar Cinema’ in C. Rinck and H. Kramer (eds.) *The Grimm Mouse: Violence in Post-9/11 Disney Animated Cinema* (contracted with University of Nebraska Press in 2018)
- ‘A Darker Heartland: A study of Otherness, Dysfunction and the Uncanny in Aardman’s Animated Short Films’ in A. Honess-Roe (ed.), *Aardman Animations: Beyond Stop Motion* (London, Bloomsbury, 2020)
- ‘The Wandering Child and Family in Crisis in Henry Selick’s *Coraline*’ in M. Mihaelova, (ed.) *Coraline: A Closer Look at Studio Laika’s Stop Motion Witchcraft* (contracted with Bloomsbury in 2018)
- ‘Framing Snow White: Preservation, Nostalgia and the American Way in the 1930s’ in C. Holliday, C. Pallant (eds.), *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs: New Perspectives in Production, Reception and Legacy* (contracted with Bloomsbury in 2018)

### Table of Themes included in this PhD by Publication

Figure 1 (below) illustrates the interrelation between themes, originality and impact of this body of work.

Publications	Themes	Originality	Wider Impact on my other publications
1. <i>Identity in Animation: A journey into Self, Difference, Culture and the Body</i>	Identity Theory Identity Self Culture Otherness Psychoanalysis Place	Psychoanalysis Identity Theory Self Otherness Culture Body	Identity Theory Culture Otherness Place Psychoanalysis
2. 'Rethinking the Rabbit – Revolution, Identity and Connection in Looney Tunes'	Identity Connection	Psychoanalysis Identity of the Toon	Empathy Psychoanalysis Connection
3. 'Mirrors and Shadows: Duality, Illusion and the Divided Self in <i>Toy Story</i> '	Otherness Place Culture Self Psychoanalysis	Psychoanalysis of characters and places - divided selves & mirrors	Otherness Divided Selves Place Culture
4. 'Voice and Violence: The Animated Child in Post-9/11 Disney and Pixar Cinema'	Identity Culture/Society Childhood Self Dysfunction	Identity and the animated child in the post 9/11 climate Culture Politics	Culture Society Childhood Dysfunction
5. 'A Darker Heartland: A study of Otherness, Dysfunction and the Uncanny in Aardman's Animated Short Films'	Difference Place Dysfunction Uncanny Identity	Dysfunctionality of Aardman's worlds Self Otherness	Difference Place Dysfunction

6. 'The Wandering Child and Family in Crisis in Henry Selick's <i>Coraline</i> '	Childhood Identity Culture Society Self Dysfunction Place	Application of childhood and family studies, taking a sociological approach	My next proposed project will be a study of the Animated Child and its identity
7. 'Framing <i>Snow White</i> : Preservation, Nostalgia and the American Way in the 1930s'	Culture Politics Identity Nostalgia	<i>Snow White</i> as iconography of 1930s: power of nostalgia	Culture Nostalgia Place

Fig.1

## **Abstract**

This critical commentary accompanies the selection of publications listed above and is submitted for consideration for the award of PhD by Publication. The thesis of these publications – namely five chapters, one monograph and one journal article – taken together, illustrates how identity shapes - and is shaped by - both animated characters and their worlds. They also inform how the medium of animation, as a malleable, often confrontational and contested form, addresses representations of Self, Difference and Place. The question of belonging is examined, along with ideas of the physical space the character inhabits, and how these identities are shaped in a unique way through the medium of animation. The commentary will address the ‘problem’ of animation as an artificial construct, and the topic of this PhD will be placed in its critical context. The commentary will then demonstrate the originality of the body of work, making reference to editors’ feedback and academic reviews. The publications to which this commentary applies will be discussed in a chronological order as a coherent body of work that reveals similar themes and representations on the topic of identity and its representation in animation, across stop motion, 2D and CG mediums.

## **Acknowledgements**

My sincere thanks goes to Dr Nigel Morris and Dr Andrew Elliott for their continued support throughout the process of this PhD by Published Work. Thank you, too, to Dr Sarah Barrow for igniting my research interests and supporting me in my early career at the University of Lincoln. Thank you, also, to the animators and directors who participated in the interviews for my monograph.



## Introduction

The illusion of life has long defined how animation is perceived, most pointedly through Disney's twelve principles of the form, detailed in Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston's seminal book, *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation* (1984), but also throughout the history of animation. Animation is a paradox of the real that introduces layers of complexities to its dissemination. The animated Toon<sup>1</sup>, in achieving liveliness through the animator's hand, *appears* to develop personhood and a self-consciousness. Suzanne Buchan calls animation "transforming cinema" (2013, 1) due to its shape-shifting abilities, yet animation is hampered by its own artificiality. It is a contradiction, unable to become real yet connecting with audiences in a way that live action may not. Animation remains elusive, challenging and thought-provoking. The act of animation has itself already occurred in the past by the time the audience views it; characters are conceived and constructed by artists on paper, computer or clay. Imaginary worlds draw us in vicariously (Wolf, 2012) and, within animation, production occurs long before it is captured by a camera.

Applying identity politics to such an elusive form is challenging, yet there is a direct link between the two. For example, Mead argues that the Self can "see itself as an object" as well as change itself (Cinoglu and Arikan, 2012, 1114-1131), and in my book *Identity in Animation: A Journey into Self, Difference, Culture and the Body*, I suggest that these views of Self create a "thing", such as the "thing" created by animation (2017, 1). Identity politics are a sociological "thing", whilst animation is a representation of the

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<sup>1</sup> To clarify, the Toon refers to the animated character, hereafter in this reflection.

fantastic. I have, however, discovered that the lack of fixedness within both, and the malleability of their definitions and forms create a connection that I wanted to explore. The animated body is important to this argument; it has a lack of consistency, can change and be constantly malleable and is unlike the real body, which simply continues. The toon's body is never static, it morphs, it squashes and stretches and is constantly reimagined. Like identity, the toon's body cannot be fixed.

Animated characters themselves achieve a form of selfhood, regularly breaking the fourth wall to demonstrate their self-awareness. For example, my journal article 'Rethinking the Rabbit: Revolution, Identity and Connection in Looney Tunes' (2016) studies Bugs' ability to transcend media and achieve an omnipresent status in culture, and my monograph *Identity in Animation* expands on this idea of a Toon's selfhood. Such an idea of selfhood is used to drive my study of character identities and the self-knowledge they are gifted with by the animators who created them. Animators, then, become god-like figures who endow their drawings with bodies, personalities, and 'life'. Animation is a further step removed from the real because of its need to animate the inanimate – the 'dead' object - but life is infused, or reimagined, by the all-seeing, all-knowing omnipotent artist's hand. The connection between artist and object – and object and audience - creates believability and a version of the 'real'.

Difference is a significant marker of identity and my published work addresses difference within animation throughout, discussing both the animated character and its world and how these challenge preconceived ideas of otherness. Richard Kearney suggests that figures of otherness "occupy the frontier zone where reason falters and fantasies flourish" (2003, 3), whilst Siebers believes that difference and stigma create a

necessary part of identity theory, one that we keep in darkness (2005, 2). My collection of pieces includes a study of the stop-motion films of Australian animator and director Adam Elliot, who addresses difference directly (my chapter entitled ‘The Misfits: Bodies, Difference and Wandering in the Clayography Films of Adam Elliot’ can be found within my monograph), as well as a piece on the lesser known short films of Aardman (‘A Darker Heartland: A study of Otherness, Dysfunction and the Uncanny in Aardman’s Animated Short Films’), which explores the dark, surreal worlds created and the characters that become figures of otherness within them. As Bowie tells us, the unconscious space that is taken up by the shadow of the Self, is where the Other “performs his darkest deeds” (1993, 83). Sid in *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995) emerges as demon child and doppelganger to Andy (discussed in my chapter ‘Mirrors and Shadows: Duality, Illusion and the Divided Self in *Toy Story*). Later, Boo represents the “othering of human children” (Shepherd, 2013, 10) in *Monsters Inc.* (Docter, 2001), which is explored in my chapter ‘Voice and Violence: The Animated Child in Post-9/11 Disney and Pixar Cinema’. Animation often tackles difference in a resolutely uncompromising way.

Place also points to identity within animation. From the white-out of the Looney Tunes world where characters are lost, to the breaking of the fourth wall that allows Bugs to step into our own world, Place is crucial to identity and links to ideas of belonging and to isolation of Self. My analysis of identity within animated films charts the relationship between the animated film and culture, from Miyazaki’s traditional, nostalgic Japan, to Elliot’s wandering pilgrims who journey to Australia. Place ignites Self and points to the familiar and also the wasteland of otherness. My chapter on Henry Selick’s 2009 film *Coraline* (‘The Wandering Child and Family in Crisis in Henry Selick’s *Coraline*’)

discusses how Place is perceived in America in the twenty-first century and how this affects notions of selfhood and belonging. The medium of animation allows wandering to take place in a dynamic and malleable way, and I discuss wandering characters, from Bugs to Harvey Krumpet to Coraline and Lilo and Stitch, and how identities are formed on the move and remain in constant flux. My chapter ‘Voice and Violence: The Animated Child in Post-9/11 Disney and Pixar Cinema’ addresses the problems of the representation of animated characters in the era immediately following 9/11 and how Place becomes ever-changing, meaning that the animated child finds his or her identity both compromised and strengthened through the changes that occur in their worlds. Changing worlds and sense of Place leads back to Difference, as characters adapt to their environments, as Levina and Bui suggest: “the new world of monsters is where humanity has to grasp its future” (2013, 2). Within ideas of Place, I also frame *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Hand, Cottrell, 1937) within nostalgia for the past and the American Way of the 1930s, where animated film can be viewed as an important artefact of Americana. This chapter, ‘Framing Snow White: Preservation, Nostalgia and the American Way in the 1930s’ is my final piece to be included in this PhD.

Within the animated film, characters are malleable and identities change according to Place; Difference may become acceptance and Self remains a fascinating, psychological, cultural journey. Identity politics, applied to these ideas, places the artificial animated Toon and its challenges and goals in the realm of the ‘real’. Identity is an all-encompassing, gigantic canopy, beneath which I have laid out animated film and placed my pieces of work for this PhD, organised into these themes.

### The Approach and the Golden Thread

My approach will be one of personal and critical reflection of the work discussed. This will form a descriptive, as well as, analytical dissemination of the thought process, theoretical framework and reception of each piece of published work. The research methods employed include textual analysis of animation history, psychoanalysis and identity studies, and interviews with animation filmmakers. This approach addresses important sociological and psychoanalytical theories, which inform the research questions of this body of work, specifically identity and how it is formed within animation through themes of Self, difference, culture and place. The research methods employed allow for the dissemination of the topic to take place on a firm grounding of theoretical work and its analysis, complemented by industry voices that inform such psychoanalytical and identity theories and apply these directly to animated characters. The connection between the research methods employed and the research questions addressed is explicit and significant and allows a journey into identity within animation, characters and their worlds, underpinned by a critical foundation.

Firstly, I will define the animation ‘problem’ in terms of the artificiality of the medium and explain how this relates to identity, of both the medium and the written pieces I am applying. This needs addressing when an author writes about the nature of animation and its identity, and I will show how my body of work has responded to this dilemma. I will explain the underpinning theoretical background of key theorists and how their models of identity politics and animation theory have assisted me in my approach to my own

writing. I will also discuss the origins of my thesis topic, relating to my own publications and broader research that has been carried out by experts in the fields of animation, identity theory and psychoanalytical studies to reveal the connectedness between existing research and my own original body of work. My own writing takes a psychoanalytical approach to animation, but also addresses the aesthetic, technological, and the cultural. It focuses in on the animated form, the characters and their worlds, and it simultaneously offers a view of society and cultural influences.

I intend to illustrate how each piece of work fits into the submission and also how the golden thread picks its way through them. Whilst identity itself remains a broadly encompassing word and is challenging to pin down, within the context of the animated character and their world, it can be disseminated more effectively, particularly within the themes I have written about in my work, such as Culture, Self, Difference, and Place. I will illustrate how the golden thread of identity in animation negotiates its way through the seven examples that form this thesis. I will also reflect on the peer reviews that each published piece underwent and how I responded to feedback, as well as highlighting the originality of this collection through the book and journal reviews of my work.

## **The ‘Problem’ with Animation**

Animation is an artificial construct. Timothy R. White suggests that Disney’s features and shorts in the 1930s and 40s were considered as “art”, with Sergei Eisenstein offering

critical praise of these, compared to Warner Bros.' animation wing, which was regarded by critics as creating mere cartoons (1998, 38). The animated film was perceived as an artefact that could achieve a likeness to a painting, or was relegated to being *just* a cartoon. The Looney Tunes in particular were deemed too violent to achieve esteem, and Betty Boop was objectified and then problematized before being censored to extraordinary lengths by the Hays Code. There is a level of irony to the 'problem' of animation. As David McGowan argues in *Animated Personalities: Cartoon Characters and Stardom in American Theatrical Shorts* (2019), animated stars were acknowledged, yet research into their authenticity remains sparse. So why were the Looney Tunes ostracized for their violence if they are merely artificial constructs? Why was Betty censored if she was simply a drawing conjured into an illusion of life? Why, if animation is declared as the 'not-real', does the medium spark so much critical debate?

Animation's artificiality can be viewed as its inhibitor. In the past, this has prevented serious scholarly research, at least beyond the Disney canon of work, as I have discussed in my journal article 'Rethinking the Rabbit: Revolution, Identity and Connection in Looney Tunes' (2016). Within this piece, included in this PhD, I discuss the definitions of culture and how it may be addressed, using Adorno and Horkheimer's exploration of American culture, and the culture industry itself, as enslaving, as a segue into my study of Looney Tunes (Batkin, 2016). It wasn't until the New Wave Movement of the 1960s enabled a reimagining of American film and animation that these views evolved. Greg Ford wrote in *Film Quarterly* about the likeness between Tex Avery's and Bunuel's work (White, 1998, 44) and Richard Thompson's article 'Meep, Meep!' acknowledged the importance of Looney Tunes: "like the best subversive and surreal art, they were recognized as dangerous by defenders of propriety" (1976, 129). Culture is discussed

within my published body of work, but I address it here initially to illustrate the conflict that the medium experiences in its continuing struggle to be acknowledged, rewarded and held in esteem over the past century.

The problem that lies at the core of animation studies is its illusory, ‘not-real’ nature, yet many theorists argue that animation should be viewed as the “super-genre” of live action (Gunning, 2012, 52), that it is “omnipresent” (Wells, 2002, 1). Suzanne Buchan points to the literal translation of anima as “the divine breath of life that blows through the subconscious of man” (2013, 27). Animation links directly to the notion of its own artificiality, which, in turn, points to animism. How can a toon achieve a living soul? Why should this question matter and what is at stake here? Acknowledging, yet simultaneously contesting, the notion of the artificiality of animation sustains my curiosity and has been present throughout my body of work for this PhD. The animated character possesses an identity; it breaks the fourth wall, it connects with its audiences, often more so than live action does, yet how ‘real’ can an animated character become? It is real in the sense that it is pencilled, inked, modelled, rigged, pushed and pulled into being. It is real in the way that it is acknowledged, written about, talked about and remembered. It is a ‘dead’ thing but is also, conversely, infused with so much ‘life’. The animated character breaks down the barrier between the real artist and the sketch, the painting and the cinematic picture.

In 1931, at the time of the release of James Whales’ film *Frankenstein*, the Walt Disney Company were releasing a plethora of Mickey Mouse films, alongside Silly Symphony outputs *Egyptian Melodies* (Jackson, 1931) and *The Spider and the Fly* (ibid). The theme of death, always prevalent in the Disney features, can be seen in these early short films



as it can in the live-action features of the time. The relationship between the animate and the inanimate is highly visible in both media, the jarring into life, from death, of the object or monster. Animation reflected live action, through its themes. Its origins, of the chase and the need for survival, are the same (these are discussed in chapter 2 of my monograph), whilst themes of life, death and rebirth resonate through both mediums.

The debate about the deadness and liveliness of animation informs my monograph *Identity in Animation* (2017). I focus on the illusion of life that exists: “the animator gives life to the animated – the two surely cannot be separated; their relationship is complicated, frustrated, enlightened and enlightening. From stillness to stirring, animation conjures life out of death” (1). I acknowledge the illusionary nature of animation and note that it is “elusive” (ibid), I then go on to explore how identity, too, is an unfixable thing: “its malleability means that it is often problematic to define, just as animation is; there is a refusal to be fixed that resonates through identity theory and permeates the animated world” (2).

Animation is charged with life; it is electrifying, mesmeric and all-powerful; its ‘problem’ creates and promotes great discussions through history that continue into the present. As a medium, it has become an important part of popular culture and film studies and it continues to shape media today.

## Origins of this Thesis

In 1994, as a humanities student, I embarked on an exchange programme to the State University of New York, New Paltz. The experience of living in the U.S and of studying American literature, theatre and culture had a profound, life-changing effect on me. It was here that I began to embed myself in arts theory, through written analyses of *The Great Gatsby* (Clayton, 1974) to *Guys and Dolls* (Mankiewicz, 1955) to *Fantasia* (Ferguson, Algar, 1940) and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The experience of travelling into New York on weekly excursions was akin to being on a film set, to sitting in a darkened theatre awaiting a performance, whether it be stage or screen; it was, quite simply, memorable. On returning to campus, I would huddle in a corner of the library, tapping away on a keyboard as I endeavoured to re-animate the texts that I had seen, to bring them to life once more. As I wrote, the texts stirred from death to life, the process itself seemingly the opposite of consumption. *Snow White* and *Fantasia*, in particular, were re-imagined as art, as being so much bigger than ‘mere cartoons’ for me.

I began teaching at Ravensbourne College in 2002. In 2005, I undertook an MA in Creative Writing and wrote a novel on the course, whilst also feeding back my theory knowledge to students creating scripts and concepts for their films. The practice of creative writing, the ability to create worlds and characters, essentially the ‘real’ out of the non-real, fascinated me and enabled me to perceive of animated worlds and characters in the same way and how they might be reimagined from paper drawings, similarly to a story on the page. Identities and how they can be shaped held my interest, from my studies to my creative writing to my research.

Later, I gained a lecturer role at the University of Lincoln, where my Head of School encouraged me to create a research profile. With her support, I was able to write a proposal for an academic book, as well as attend my very first conference in Toronto, for the Society of Animation Studies. During the conference, I met some inspiring speakers and my own presentation on Looney Tunes was commended by a leading scholar in the field of animation studies, Professor Donald Crafton, who noted that he thought that my approach on the topic and particularly on Bugs Bunny was ‘original’, and he encouraged me to continue my studies in this area. My topic was the revolutionary tendencies of the studio and the connection it made with the audience; at the core of this was Bugs Bunny and his identity, and this became my first publication.

Retrospectively, I believe my introduction to analysing animation and theatre whilst studying in America led me to my PhD topic. My own book, *Identity in Animation*, emerged from my reading about the psycho-analytical approach that Chuck Jones developed in the 1950s to his characters, notably Bugs, Daffy, and Elmer. Jones, whilst acknowledging the artistry of the animator in creating life from a drawing, simultaneously refuted the idea that Bugs was a character that could be contained within an animated cel, and that he existed only within the frame. Jones thought that Bugs could exist anywhere at all. He attributed traits to Bugs, such as his being “counter-revolutionary” (Jones, 1989, 145), only acting when attacked, and of his omnipotence and inability to be bested. Bugs was not, according to Jones, a simple 2D drawing brought to life; he possessed human traits: he could step from the frame into the Grohman Theatre for the Oscars, he could confront the audience with his mocking gaze. Chuck Jones and Bugs Bunny formed the origins of my published work and, at Toronto in 2014, I presented ideas of Bugs as mentalist, sociopath, and genius. The feedback

during the session from Donald Crafton, author of such books as *Shadow of a Mouse: Performance and World Making in Animation* (2012), gave me further inspiration for developing my idea about the relationship between identity and the animated character. Crafton's book addresses animation as performance and he views the animated character as being able to achieve presence through their implied bodies, and that animated actors are the same as live-action ones through their performance (2012, 16, 2). The performativity of the animated toon connects to its presence, and this has often been the subject of theoretical discussions by experts in the field. The toon's performance is central to these debates and places animation in the realm of the unreal: that the animator's hand enables the illusion of life but it is merely an illusion, as discussed above. This has formed much of the basis of animation studies, building on the notion of the spectacle and trickery of the medium, from the early 1900s through the Disney era and beyond.

Identity, the theme of my thesis, distances itself from the performativity of the toon and traverses new, original ground. At the start of my research, I considered the question 'how can a toon achieve selfhood if it is merely an artificial construct, one that relies on the hand of the artist to breathe life into it?' How 'real' can a drawing become and what happens to the Toon once it lives? Rather than embracing the idea of performance and the theatricality behind animation, which is already widely disseminated by experts such as Crafton, Wells, Leslie, Klein, and others, I began to research identity politics and selfhood, and was struck by the immediate connection that can be made between the character and the audience. I also began to notice the shadows that exist in the character's world and the otherness that is as pervasive as Self: it becomes just as central to personal identity. Within animation, I realised, Difference becomes significant and

more visible and vibrant than live action allows, and the space the character inhabits, its world, and cultural context of the animated film, become clear signposts of identity.

Bugs Bunny and my subsequent journal article ‘Rethinking the Rabbit: Revolution, Identity and Connection in Looney Tunes’ led me to my monograph, in which I applied these ideas of selfhood and otherness to the characters and their worlds.

My research journey has culminated in my establishing identity as a marker for Place as well as Self and Difference in animation, and I have increasingly begun to include discussions about the world the character inhabits and the culture that is represented within such landscapes that have created such an illusionary power. Casting the artifice aside, what does the toon represent and how do identity politics enable signs and signifiers to constantly make such startling connections with the audience, through ideas of Self and Difference, Place and its absence and Culture? This is at the core of my body of work for this PhD.

## The Theoretical Framework

The collection of published work that underpins this PhD proposal incorporates identity and animation theories. I have divided examples of these into the tables below to illustrate some of the key authors and themes that have formed the theoretical framework of this study. Within the first table, I have included theories of Self and otherness, the body, place, childhood, culture and nostalgia. The second table includes some of the key animation theories and their authors, as well as interviews with filmmakers that I have carried out as part of my research.

<b>Identity Theories: Self – Difference – Place – Culture</b>
Roy Baumeister: Self and Identity
Peter Burke and Jan Stets: Identity Theory
Cinoglu and Arikan: Self and Identity
Mark R. Leary & June Tangney: the Self
Sigmund Freud: The Uncanny
Stuart Hall: Difference, Stigma
Hamid Naficy & Teshome Gabriel: Otherness
Linda Alcoff & Eduardo Mendieta: Identity, Race, Gender
Kwame Anthony Appiah: Identity and Migrants
Mike Featherstone: Identity and Place
Samuel Huntingdon, Steven Mintz, Jefferson Kellogg, Stephanie Coontz: US Identity
Warren Susman: Culture as History
Svetlana Boym: Nostalgia
Harry Eiss, Michael Grimm, Michael Wyness: Childhood

Fig. 2

Animation Theories & Interviews
Michael Barrier: the Golden Age of American Animation
Karen Beckman: Animation & Film Theory
Suzanne Buchan: Anima & Pervasiveness
Alan Cholodenko: Animation / Live Action
James Clarke: Pixar and its Audience
Paul Wells: Genre, Gender, Omnipotence
Donald Crafton: Performance & Identity
Chuck Jones: Approaches to Animation: theories, interviews, practice
Norman Klein: Identity and the Animated Short
Esther Leslie: Politics & Animation
Kevin Sandler, Barry Putterman: Looney Tunes & Identity
Joanna Quinn, Emily Paccoult, Nedy Acet, 2D/CG filmmakers: <b>interview with author</b>
Merlin Crossingham, Creative Director of Aardman, <b>interview with author</b>
Garcia Carsi, CG Animation Director of Pocoyo, <b>interview with author</b>
Peter Dodd, Hilary Audus, 2D Animation Directors, <b>interview with author</b>
Adam Elliot, stop motion Animation Director, <b>interview with author</b>

Fig. 3

These two tables encompass key authors that relate to the body of my work overall.

Many of them have been used in more than one publication within this PhD body of work and they form the supporting framework of my argument, focusing in on animation and also offering a wider theoretical context of sociology, culture and the body.

### Existing Identity Theories: Self, Difference and Place

A selection of some of the key authors in identity theory from Fig.2 above, are summarised in this section. These are notable scholars and experts in their field and I have discussed this existing work within the themes of Self, Difference and Place that I have found useful for applying to my own animation and identity studies.

**Self and selfhood** are key to understanding identity politics in the field of sociology. The question of what is the Self and how it can be achieved form the building blocks for any discussion on this topic and I have applied this to my published work for this PhD. Roy Baumeister, a social psychologist and expert in the field of the Self, belonging and self-esteem, has written numerous academic texts on the topic and is a professor at the University of Queensland. His work *Self and Identity: A brief overview of what they are, what they do and how they work* (2011) explores definitions and ideas of selfhood and what it means and, within this, he suggests that the Self “begins with the physical body” (2011, 48). Baumeister at once acknowledges the elusiveness of the Self as well as the paradox, that it is also familiar; he questions the phrase to know thyself, retorting that it begs the question “what exactly is there to know?” (Ibid). This statement, itself, implies an otherness, as much as it seeks validation of Self. Baumeister views Self as a knowledge structure (as a reflective consciousness), as interpersonal (the Self emerges from the interpersonal relationships it has with others), and as an agent: “self is not simply a being but a doer” (49). I have found Baumeister’s study useful in identifying how Self may be able to be applied to animation, as I outline extensively in my monograph. Whilst the idea of Self requiring the physical body presents a problem for the animated character, I have found that Crafton’s theory about the ‘implied’ body in the Toon offers a solution to this idea of Self.

Mark Leary and June Tangney, in *The Handbook of Self and Identity* (2012), view the Self as having the capacity to be an ‘I’ as well as an object; they argue that Self is not necessarily person or personhood but an individual can be viewed as “having a self”, rather than *being* a self (6). This has been adopted in my monograph in chapter 3 ‘Conflict and connection, body and performance: how Looney Tunes broke out of the



asylum’ as it complements the idea of the animated Self, that Bugs and Daffy can have an identity like this, and it suggests a sort of shape-shifting Self that can survive in different locations, morphing into life. Oyserman, in chapter four of Leary and Tangney’s book, writes that identities can create a “meaning-making anchor” (69), yet Self is both something that involves evaluative standards and something that is a “fluid, ever-changing description in the moment” (79). This description of selfhood is particularly useful for this PhD, as something indeterminable and unfixed, yet paradoxically apparent. I have adopted this theory within my research and analysis of animation and identity, particularly within my monograph.

Huseyin Cinoglu and Yusuf Arikan discuss the Self and its relationship to its environment, as interpersonal and as being in constant flux: “identity is not a set, concrete entity” (2012, 1116). In particular, they focus on the social group structures as helping or even ‘forcing’ Self to be a member of: “Self cannot be separated from the society because Self can only exist and be meaningful in its relation with other selves or entities” (1115). Narrative theory resonates within this interpretation of Self: that characters need conflict and other characters to create stories. This can clearly be seen in my monograph studies of the characters of Betty Boop, the Looney Tunes, and Wallace and Gromit. The authors Peter Burke and Jan Stets focus on the question of what it means to be who we are, that identity is a set of meanings that define us, that agents “are actors”: they are the entities that act out the defining characteristics of the Self (2009, 6). I discuss identity, selfhood and acting within chapter 3 of my book, focusing on Bugs and Daffy, and I find that performance and self-awareness are key to the identity politics playing out between these characters. As with Leary and Tangney, Self is viewed by Burke and Stets as an object, and therefore can regard and evaluate itself (9).

Much has been documented on the theme of **Difference**, and how it relates to identity politics. Difference is positioned at the polar opposite of Self, yet these two strands are linked together, occasionally through social interaction, occasionally through narrative structure, and one cannot be discussed without the other. Stuart Hall is a leading scholar in the field of cultural studies and representation, and his most notable text on the subject of difference is *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Within it he states: “difference signifies. It ‘speaks’” (1997, 230). I have applied this to my own investigations into stigmas of otherness, particularly for my chapter ‘The Misfits: bodies, difference and wandering in the Clayography films of Adam Elliot’ in *Identity in Animation*, wherein I discuss the stop motion characters of Adam Elliot, and how they enable difference to be positioned centrally, inviting scrutiny into ideas of Othering and, at the same time, establishing familiarity with characters who are typically stigmatized. I have found Hall’s exploration of the marking of difference very useful, particularly his study of the closing of ranks that occurs as we stigmatize and expel the unfamiliar. Within this book he also, significantly, asks the question “what is the secret fascination of otherness?” (258). Kwame Appiah posits a response in his writings on the topic, suggesting that “the Other may not be very Other at all” (2007, 64), as he explores difference as a condition and a condition as having an identity. Similarly, Edward Said discusses appropriation of what is other and different to render it in one’s own image (1976); Appiah (quoting Charles Taylor) claims that our identities are “diabolically shaped” (108), alluding to difference within the Self, which leads to stigmatization in society.

Hamid Naficy & Teshome Gabriel, in their book *Otherness and the Media: The Ethnography of the Imagined and the Imaged* (1993) discuss the boundaries of difference, including power and ethnicity, and they relate the Other to “disorder” (xi), suggesting that having an identity is about knowing what one is not (226). Kathryn Woodward agrees with this theory, and her writings explore difference, fixedness, and, perhaps most interestingly, the body and how it can be a site of disruption, of power and laziness: “the relationship between ‘self’ and the potentially unruly or destructive flesh is of central concern, whether the body is conceived of as territory, as thing, or as a competing will” (1997, 122). I have incorporated Woodward’s research into my own studies of the body throughout my publications, most notably within my monograph chapter “The Misfits”, above, and within my chapter “The ‘thingness’ of CG and the life of the object”.

Martin Norden’s book *The Cinema of Isolation: a history of physical disability in the movies* (1994) further explores the disabled body, and suggests the established norms of mainstream film invite the audience to position themselves with the able-bodied characters, thus reducing the disabled to “objects of spectacle” through the enhancement of their isolation and otherness (1). His study focuses on people who represent difference and who are viewed as both ‘Others’ and also, conversely, mirrors of the Self. Norden shares Hall’s view, that we share a dual fascination and horror of difference.

Professor of Philosophy Richard Kearney’s book *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* (2003) ponders the relationship between the human Self and the unknown monsters beyond the acceptable boundaries of the familiar, within which he argues that monsters signal “borderline experiences” between the Ego and the Other

(84). Within this text, Kearney is intrigued by, and explores, the no-man's land of otherness that exists between worlds of the familiar and the monstrous. Additionally, Freud's theory of the Uncanny (which was influenced by Ernst Jentsch's work) also remains a valuable text on these boundaries between the familiar and the unfamiliar (heimlich and unheimlich); home as a trusted place but at once representing both a dream and dread: "at times I feel like a man who walks in the night and believes in ghosts; every corner is heimlich and full of terrors" (1971, 226). Kearney's and Freud's work have influenced my writing on difference, particularly within my chapter 'A Darker Heartland: A Study of Otherness, Dysfunction and the Uncanny in Aardman's Animated Short Films', in *Style and Representation in Aardman Animations* (2019). Here I address the no-man's land that Kearney proposes and I find fascinating connections between this othering and the short films of Aardman, particularly within the films *Babylon* (Lord and Sproxton, 1986) and *The Pearce Sisters* (Cook, 2007).

**Place**, then, becomes a useful theme within identity politics; it ties into culture, selfhood and difference and forms an important part of the theoretical context here, and of my own study. Professor of Sociology Mike Featherstone of Goldsmiths has written prolifically on the topic of global and consumer culture and how place can inform identity. In *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity*, Featherstone explores what he calls an "intensified globalisation" (1995, 10) and how many cultures find their identities transforming as they move across borderlines. He suggests, poignantly, that "to know who you are means to know where you are" (2003, 342). Hall and DuGay reinforce this theory of globalisation, stating that "we are pilgrims whatever we do" (1996, 20). They suggest that the real problem of identity is not how it is constructed but how it can be preserved (23), whilst simultaneously arguing that

identities can be discarded like a change of clothes and that we inherently have a “horror of being bound and fixed” (26). I have found these theories useful within my body of work, particularly within my study of Adam Elliot’s clayographies (chapter 6 of my monograph) and within my Looney Tunes analysis (chapter 3). Elliot’s characters wander across continents to try to find ‘home’ and self, such as the characters in *Mary and Max* (Elliot, 2010). Identity as something fluid and free-flowing has been a particular focus of my research and analysis. Within my Looney Tunes chapter and within my journal article ‘Rethinking the Rabbit: Revolution, Culture and Identity in Looney Tunes’, I address the migration of animators between studios as part of this wandering phenomenon, as well as the lack of fixing within the characters themselves.

Place and identity interweave in Cultural Historian Warren I. Susman’s book *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (2003), within which he discusses America’s obsession with, and desire to live within, its own past. The author fixes upon the search among many for the “real” America and how this influenced the nation and its identity. I have applied his theories to my chapter ‘Framing Snow White: Preservation, Nostalgia and the American Way in the 1930s’, which explores the 1930s as a specific point in time when America searched for its “real” identity and how Disney’s first animated feature became an important artefact of this era.

Susan Faludi’s studies on national identity in her text *The Terror Dream: Myth and Misogyny in an Insecure America* are also useful for capturing this retreat “into a fantasized yester-year” (2007, 6) following the 9/11 attacks. Both Susman and Faludi explore America’s identity in terms of culture, setting, and history, and Place becomes all-pervasive within these discourses. Samuel P. Huntingdon, author of *Who Are We?*

*The Challenges to America's National Identity* (2004) discusses the geographical mobility that forms fascinating identities on the move (285) and I have embraced these studies within my chapter 'The Wandering Child and Family in Crisis in Henry Selick's *Coraline*', which explores the meaning of family and also the wandering between two worlds: one fictional, one real. Theories about the family follow on from texts on national identities, with Stephanie Coontz arguing that, despite us always being told that the only safe place is home, American families have always been on the move and often in crisis (1992, 207, x).

These theories of identity (of self, difference and place in particular) have helped to create the theoretical framework for my body of published work. These are complemented by an animation studies theoretical framework, which is outlined below.

### On Animation

The field of scholarly animation studies has grown exponentially over the past decade in particular, offering a diverse plethora of texts on the subject, from a questioning of the 'real' to dissections of gender, race, character, worlds and culture. I have drawn upon global animation studies to help contextualise my publications, including Japan, Australia and America, and I have merged them with the identity theories framework above.

Animation history and the emergence of the studio system in the U.S have been widely addressed by scholars including Leonard Maltin, Michael Barrier and Norman Klein. Maltin's text *Of Mice and Magic* (1987) explores the American studio, the techniques and artistry pioneered within it and his chapters on Disney, Fleischer and Warner Bros. are particularly illuminating. He discusses the rise and impact of these studios as well as

the highly competitive nature between them and also explains the character identities that were created by the artists involved. Barrier's book *Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation in its Golden Age* (1997) contains a focus on Disney which is particularly insightful, from the studio's beginnings to its feature-length work and the changes that took place during that time. Identities, of artists, characters, the studio and Disney himself, form the core of this text and, as Barrier notes, identities were "swallowed up" for the greater good (1999, 137-138). This text includes interviews with the artists involved in the studio system in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Klein's book *Seven Minutes: The Life and Death of the American Animated Cartoon* focuses on the animated short film and exposes the anti-realism of its style and content, comparing these celebrated cartoons with the emerging sophistication of Disney's full-length features. He explores the "expressive possibilities of the anarchic" (1993, 1), where the toons themselves were intended to be easily readable in terms of their identities and goals. These texts have informed my own studies, particularly my monograph chapters on Disney and Looney Tunes (chapters 3 and 4), which address identities on various levels, from the character to the artists to the studio and society. My chapter on Disney, in particular, has been shaped by the historical readings of animation that I have engaged with, and my study of Patriarchy and the law of the father is influenced by Barrier, Klein and Maltin.

Esther Leslie's book *Hollywood Flatlands: Animation, Critical Theory and the Avant Garde* (2002) is particularly insightful for exploring the identity of the pre-feature animated film. Her work applies political theories to her findings, discussing the meetings between cultural theorists at Burbank studios in the 1930s and noting Sergei Eisenstein's penchant for Mickey Mouse cartoons. Leslie criticizes Disney's formalist feature films that replaced its anti-realist animated short cartoons, and Professor Donald

Crafton, in his book about animation performance, *Shadow of a Mouse: Performance, Belief and World-Making in Animation*, agrees that “something was sacrificed” in the process (2012, 149). Crafton’s book explores performance as the core of understanding animation characters and worlds and how the audience connects with them and he draws on theatre studies and film to drive his argument. Paul Wells, in *Understanding Animation*, incorporates ideas of thinking about animated film, with history and narrative approaches and of the studio being the yardstick by which other animation is measured (1998, 25). Within his book *Animation: Genre and Authorship* he includes a timeline of animation history and his views of Walt Disney’s “assimilation” of his artists’ creativity (2002, 21) are particularly interesting and complement the views of the other theorists mentioned above. These have helped to further inform and shape my chapter ‘Disney: Self, Patriarchy and Punishment’ mentioned above, wherein I explore the compromising of identities and argue that the law of the father dominates the classic Disney era, its artists and the studio’s outputs.

The book *Chuck Jones: Conversations* (Furniss, 2005) provides valuable insights into the thoughts and philosophies of the Warner Bros. Animation Director during his career. The collection explores his relationship with Walt Disney, with his producers and fellow artists at the time, as well as dissects the Looney Tunes characters that Jones was so instrumental in developing, such as Daffy Duck, Bugs Bunny, Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote. Jones discusses the pared-back sets that enabled the characters to achieve such credible identities as well as the psychology behind Bugs. Similarly, Kevin Sandler’s edited book *Reading the Rabbit: Explorations in Warner Bros. Animation* (1998) contains notable chapters by scholars such as Crafton, who writes about the exposure sheet and the demand on the Looney Tunes wing to produce more content than any other



studio at the time, and Richard White who writes about the critical shift from Disney to Warner Bros. Barry Putterman explores how Jones developed the depth and psychology of the characters, enabling the studio to break boundaries and elevate the American cartoon beyond pre-existing perceptions about animation (1998, 34-35). I have found these studies particularly useful for my own chapter on Looney Tunes, discussed earlier, and also for my journal article 'Rethinking the Rabbit', in terms of the psychoanalysis of Bugs, his self-awareness and how he could exist beyond the animation cel itself.

For my monograph chapters on stop motion and CGI, Barry Purves' book *Stop Motion: Passion, Process and Performance* usefully explores stop motion as an enabler of difference and the uncanny, particularly his views on the relationship between this medium and horror, as "a private world, where those with a slightly distorted or eccentric imagination can function so well" (2007, 21). Ronen's theories of the Real were particularly useful for my chapter 4: 'The Case for Wallace and Gromit: Britishness, Horror, Slapstick and the Real', and his belief that we apply a psycho-analytical approach to the "truth" of an object (2002, 11). A. Ackerman's writing on the "thing-like" properties of 3D in his book *Seeing Things: From Shakespeare to Pixar* (2011, 118) was also insightful, as I was able to apply this to the thingness of identity theory in my own studies, particularly within chapter 4 and also chapter 8 for my analysis of Pixar and the thingness of CGI. Authors who have explored the medium of animation as 'real' or as needing to belong to film theory include Karen Beckman, Alan Cholodenko, and Suzanne Buchan, and I have found their views insightful to apply in my own published work. The question of the Real becomes pertinent in animation studies and it is one that has intrigued me and propelled my own scholarship on identity and animation; within 2D the character embodies the Real and transcends the flatness of paper to live and breathe

within and beyond the cel through the direct connection with the animator's hand.

Within stop motion the connection is fleshy, malleable and fingerprinted and it leans towards the 'real' through the physical set it inhabits, and within CGI the character is enabled through its polished thingness within the computer screen and interaction with its very own universe.

### **Originality and Contribution to Knowledge: The Body of Published Work**

Whilst acknowledging the artificiality of the form, my body of published work attempts to place the animated cartoon in the realm of the 'real'. Identity politics allows a different sort of analysis to take place to the one that is typically applied to animation studies. The theory applied to my work, and discussed above, has informed my approach, and what follows is my discussion of my body of work, which forms an original, wider contribution to the field. This body of research applies identity theories to the medium of animation and establishes that the one impacts on the other in fascinating ways. As stated above, the performativity of the toon has been widely disseminated by established theorists, rendering it necessary for the author to adopt a more original approach. That the toon 'performs' is not in doubt here; the animator creates and gives life to the inanimate object and imbues it with personality, the process is undoubtedly one of performance. Once we establish that this is the case, however, the identity of the

character and its impact can be closely examined and reveals itself to be more malleable and challenging here than it is elsewhere. It is within identity politics that Betty Boop reveals a liveliness and awareness of her audience, and where Bugs understands his world and its constraints, just as he understands how to escape them. At the heart of this argument is the voice of Chuck Jones resonating through the annals of animation history and teaching us about the psychoanalysis that is possible. Jones' statements that Bugs knew where he was going, that he could go anywhere, that Daffy could exist in an empty space, living and struggling "on an empty screen" (Maltin, 1987, 263) enforces the point about the 'life' imbued in the toon and it has inspired my own study. The animated figure becomes emboldened by a sense of Self, of livelihood, passion and self-awareness. Identity, here, is vibrant, colourful, flexible and bold; it is at the core of animation and, because it is developed to such a sophisticated level, it refutes the 'not-real'. This is where my approach begins.

In this section, I discuss each piece of work that contributes towards this PhD, in a chronological order, and outline its original contribution to the field of animation studies with the use of reviews and impact for published pieces, and editors' feedback for contracted pieces. The work included, in order, is as follows:

- (2016) 'Rethinking the Rabbit – Revolution, Identity and Connection in Looney Tunes', *Society of Animation Studies Journal*
- (2017) *Identity in Animation: A Journey into Self, Difference, Culture and the Body* monograph
- (2018) 'Mirrors and Shadows: Duality, Illusion and the Divided Self in *Toy Story*' in S. Smith, N. Brown, S. Summers (eds.) *Toy Story: How Pixar Reinvented the Animated Feature*
- (contracted 2018, forthcoming) 'Voice and Violence: The Animated Child in Post-9/11 Disney and Pixar Cinema' in C. Rinck and H. Kramer (eds.) *The Grimm Mouse: Violence in post-9/11 Animated Disney Film*

- (2020) 'A Darker Heartland – A Study of Otherness, Dysfunction and the Uncanny in Aardman's Animated Short Films' in A. Honess Roe (ed.), *Aardman Animations: Beyond Stop Motion*
- (contracted 2018, forthcoming) 'The Wandering Child and Family in Crisis in Henry Selick's *Coraline*' in M. Mihailova (ed.) *Coraline: A Closer Look at Studio Laika's Stop Motion Witchcraft*
- (contracted 2018, forthcoming) 'Framing Snow White: Preservation, Nostalgia and the American Way in the 1930s' in C. Holliday and C. Pallant (eds.), *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs: New Perspectives in Production, Reception and Legacy*

## **‘Rethinking the Rabbit – Revolution, Identity and Connection in Looney Tunes’**

My journey began with Bugs Bunny, as discussed above. I delivered a paper on Looney Tunes and its revolutionary tendencies at the Society of Animation Studies in Toronto in 2014, and at the core of this were the believable and uncontrollable traits of Bugs. My observations of Bugs, as possessing mentalist, sociopathic, and omnipresent qualities, and of watching the audience, were commented on by scholar Donald Crafton at the conference as introducing a fresh approach to dissecting the character and considering him as the ‘real’. I began re-writing the paper as a journal article, ‘Rethinking the Rabbit – Revolution, Identity and Connection in Looney Tunes’, in 2015. My focus was on culture and Warner Bros. animation, my argument contradicting the early critics of the studio, who lamented that these cartoons were “deficient in grace” (White, 1998, 40). Culture informs the studio’s work; the relationship between the animated shorts, the establishment (of the studio and the industry), and Hollywood was overt, I argued. Social and political contexts, as well as cultural ones, needed exploring in order to begin to understand identity. I addressed the revolutionary tendencies of the Warner Bros. animation team and the ‘attack’ that takes place within their work, as well as the connection made with the audience through the breaking of the fourth wall. Focusing on seminal shorts such as *What’s Opera, Doc?* (Jones, 1957) and *Duck Amuck* (Jones, 1953), I addressed the identities of the characters, notably their self-awareness and believability. Here I began to notice that “a blurring of the lines between the cartoon and live action; the psychological coherence of characters present in American cinema... transfers readily onto the Looney Tunes cel”. (Batkin, 2016). Whilst Tex Avery’s surreal, quick-fire humour was an obvious factor in the success of Looney Tunes, it was the psychological attentiveness of the Chuck Jones cartoons that drew my attention in

this paper and created a curiosity in me to further study the identity of the animated character. How can a Toon achieve a Self? This was an initial question that I asked myself at the start of this journey and it has remained significant throughout.

### Impact

My paper was peer reviewed and suggestions were made about fleshing out my argument, such as expanding on how I was defining culture in this context, and including the Frankfurt School in my discussion. I was also advised to expand the films to include Tex Avery's earlier work for Warner Bros. I re-wrote the article based on this peer feedback and it was accepted for publication. One peer reviewer commented, in feedback on the essay itself, that my article made some interesting points about the uneasy muddling of highbrow and lowbrow cultural forms in comedy, as these were important in understanding the context of culture and Warner Bros. animation and its studio identity at the time. Such comments support the idea of how culture and comedy can be analysed in terms of placing Warner Bros. animation, and its identity, into a critical and recognised context. In addition, the original comments I received at the SAS Conference in 2014 on Bugs and his identity were what propelled this article into being, and these were mirrored in later comments on my monograph (see Mikhaela Young's book review on page 60 of this thesis and in Appendix A.4).

The editor of *The Society of Animation Studies Journal*, Amy Ratelle, commented that my final journal article made a solid contribution to the study of Warner Bros. films (2015), and the journal article was published in 2016. It is included here as the first piece towards my PhD by publication.

## ***Identity in Animation: A Journey into Self, Difference, Culture and the Body***

Following on from my paper presentation and write up of my journal article, I began planning my monograph, based on how identity is created in animated characters and how their self-awareness and knowledge of their world sparks to life. My book proposal for *Identity in Animation* was accepted by Taylor and Francis after two sample chapters were peer reviewed by scholars in the field. The reviewers recommended the proposal for publication, and one reviewer made a helpful recommendation of including the artist and director Adam Elliot within a chapter in the book to address animation on a more global scale. The reviewers felt that this monograph adopted an interesting, novel approach on the topic of how identity can be applied to and perceived of in the medium (see appendix A.1). The process of planning and writing the 8-chapter monograph took me two years, with further time spent on revisions, following its final peer review. The final reviewer commended the integration of primary research, in the form of interviews, within the book, which were viewed as being able to support the argument in an innovative way.

*Identity in Animation* underpins the sociological aspects of the animated character and their world, exploring the inner psychology and exterior motivation that are propelled by ideas of belonging, self, difference, place, gender and the animated body. Taking a unique approach to animation studies, the book addresses identity politics and how a character might achieve a sense of selfhood, how stereotypes are at times reinforced, and at other times contested, through the various mediums of animation. It explores how

identity is informed by Self, otherness, culture and the animated body. The book charts American, British, Australian and Japanese animation, and includes chapters on Betty Boop and the Fleischers, Disney, Warner Bros., Nick Park, Adam Elliot, Hayao Miyazaki, and Pixar, as well as gender studies, within its journey through animation and identity. The book also conducts original interviews with global animators, artists and directors to reinforce the idea that the personality of the Toon is carefully considered, enlivened and made 'real'. Interviewees include Peter Dodd and Hilary Audus (2D Animation Directors), Nedy Acet (DreamWorks animator), Chris Page (Weta Animator), Merlin Crossingham (Creative Director of Wallace and Gromit), Guillermo Garcia Carsi (Director of *Pocoyo*), Marie Paccoult and Joanna Quinn (independent 2D Animators and Directors).

The methods used in my book include textual analysis of the films and characters, research into identity politics and animation history, as well as reading into cultural and political contexts and including original interviews with filmmakers. These different methodologies enabled a broader and more vibrant approach to the monograph, and helped to accentuate its original contribution to the field. My primary research helped to shape this study; my approach to this (and my other publications) adopts the idea that the artist's intention is significant, and I wanted to explore how this intention in turn, shapes the final output. The questions I asked focused on character identity, difference and stigmatization and the space the character inhabited. The answers to the questions I asked supported my topic and its argument; the artists all appeared to value identity and selfhood; they pointed to the themes within their work and to the importance of society, culture and place in framing animation.



*Identity in Animation* considers a sociological reading of the medium and places identity at its core. The monograph questions and defines Self as it is applied to the animated character and extends beyond ideas of performance and animism, which have been widely documented by authors such as Crafton, Wells, Klein, Leslie and Barrier. My approach addresses ideas of the toon's self-awareness as well as its relationship to others and to its world, its ability to retain an identity despite its malleability, and its attitude towards place, culture and society. The book reimagines personhood, otherness and bodies and questions the identity of the animated character and where it fits into its world and into culture. The target audience for this book comprises my peers in the field of animation studies and of scholars in the wider fields of social sciences and humanities.

### Impact

*Identity in Animation* has achieved international impact through its digital or physical placement within university libraries. These include the University of Macau in China, The University of London, the University of Kunste in Berlin, the University of Padua, The University of Montreal, Brown University, Harvard University, MIT, Cornell University, The New York Public Library, the Library of Congress, Nanyang Technological University, Auckland University and the University of Pretoria. Interestingly, the book has also been included on the curriculum reading list for the University of Westminster's module 'Aesthetics of Television Drama'.

In addition to its placement in international libraries, the monograph has been peer-reviewed for a variety of journals. It was reviewed in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Volume 51, Issue 2, Special Issue: 'Neoliberalism and Popular Culture', by Michael

Meindl in April 2018. Meindl states “Batkin offers a text that is crucial at a time when the field of animation studies is growing by leaps and bounds”, and goes on to say “Beyond looking at the characters within the animated films, Batkin shows how these characters ‘share identity’ with characters in other films, as well as with people within the real world” (556). He notes that the author “frames a lot of her discussion in terms of national identity” and that the book acts as a jumping off point for discussing animation and identity (558) (see Appendix A.2).

The book has also been peer reviewed for the publication *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* by Maarten Gageldonk in November 2018 (see Appendix A.3). Gageldonk states that *Identity in Animation: A Journey into Self, Difference, Culture and the Body* is “insightful” and “reflects a two-pronged effort to understand how identity in animation is formed and represented on the screen, as well as how identity politics are reflected in the medium” (257). Gageldonk comments on the monograph’s study of Disney and that “the move to more naturalistic character design... entailed a loss of clear identity”. He writes “Batkin’s discussion of Looney Tunes is particularly illuminating” and states:

Batkin illustrates effectively that the adventures of Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd, Road Runner, Wile E. Coyote and others went much further: they became acts of culture jamming in their recurrent appropriation and adaptation of popular narratives, parodying the political elite and juggling with gender roles... how easily Looney Tunes characters slip into roles but at the same time do not sacrifice their own identities, a two-tier approach unique for its time that Batkin acutely analyses’ (258).

Gageldonk goes on to discuss the monograph’s chapters on stop motion, writing that these are “a welcome addition and broaden(s) the scope of the highly American-centric early chapters of Batkin’s book. The very plasticity of clay here once more serves to stress the flexibility of identity in animation”. Gageldonk comments that within the final

chapter of the book, on CGI, “Batkin’s idea that 3D animation allows for a greater level of ‘thingness’ than traditional 2D animation offers interesting opportunities for discussion” (259). The reviewer remarks that “the book profits from the use of a wide range of critical theories and places seminal animation scholarship by Suzanne Buchan and Paul Wells alongside the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin, Zygmunt Bauman and Judith Butler”. He continues:

it is laudable that Batkin is able to provide such a heterogenic approach to an understudied subject and the inclusion of industry interviews helps to substantiate her argumentation. The notion of identity formation in animation has been a neglected theme that is all the more noticeable given that the malleability of identity is well-suited to the medium. Animation often plays with the relation between body and identity, the fluidity of gender, as well as the realization of self and the relationship between individual and cultural memory. While these subjects have been more overtly addressed in what is often called artistic or experimental animation (one thinks of the films of Michèle Cournoyer, Joanna Priestley and the Brothers Quay, for instance), a discussion of these themes in the context of more mainstream animation is a valuable addition to animation studies (ibid).

In February 2019, Mikhaela E. Young reviewed the book for the journal *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, Volume 36, Issue 2 (see Appendix A.4):

“Identity asks important questions of animation,” writes Jane Batkin (2017).

If there is no physical presence, what happens to self? If there are no boundaries, what of otherness? If binary codes need not apply, what defines the individual? If place is both present and absent, where does the Toon stand? (p. 6)

Jane Batkin explores questions like these and many more in *Identity in animation: a journey into self, difference, culture and the body*. But she does so in a fresh and remarkable way: through the Toon, our cartoon hero, heroine, and villain. Batkin focuses her exploration of identity on this world of animation, and how it frames meanings for viewers, as well as for the era and culture within which each character and animator arose.

Young states that the book is insightful in its framing of identity through selfhood, culture and society and how it places animation studies within the wider field of social sciences and humanities:

(the book) provides insight into questions about identity, especially considering how animation is both art and artifact, a part of our past, but also a vision of the present in an ever-changing world. Batkin's use of historical, philosophical, psychological, and anthropological references helps guide the reader through the beginnings of animation to the present day, and encourages us to think differently about the world within animation, within the characters themselves. In the process, we re-examine neoteny, sexuality and gender, otherness, place, time, and inner life within animation, society, and our own sense of reality.

*Identity in animation: a journey into self, difference, culture and the body* will be aptly relevant in fields such as media studies, anthropology, psychology, and could easily fit within larger discussions of Self and Other in the humanities and social sciences. Batkin reminds us that animation allows us to find the Self in each of these Toon characters, onto which we project our own desires, fears, notions of differences, and needs for heroes and villains. We realize how these characters represent the intricacies of identity, self, and society. "Identities," she writes, "are complex and multifaceted and are revealed through the psychological shaping of an individual to his/her role in society," and animation gives "the message to live and to embrace one's own identity" (p. 148).

Young's extensive review of my monograph is insightful, particularly her comments that the book traverses the field of animation studies and embraces the humanities and social sciences through its discussions of Self and Other. She views my approach of using the character to highlight identity as "fresh and remarkable" (6). It is the toon itself that matters and that accentuates the importance of identity politics in animation.

Finally, in May 2019 *Identity in Animation* was entered into the McLaren Prize and was on a longlist of 23 books being considered for this award.

## ***‘Mirrors and Shadows: Duality, Illusion and the Divided Self in Toy Story’***

In 2015, I attended a conference at the University of Sunderland to celebrate ‘*Toy Story* at 20’. At the opening night of the event, the keynote speaker asked the question “what else is there to say about *Toy Story*?” The subsequent conference revealed that, actually, there was rather a lot. Book publications up to that point had focused on Pixar as a whole and its production process (ed. by Paik and Sito) rather than analyses of specific films, but the ‘*Toy Story* at 20’ conference provided an opportunity to explore toys as commodities, childhood, puppetry and nostalgia. My own paper adopted a psychoanalytic approach to *Toy Story* and I explored the othering and doubling that I noticed in the film, through its main characters and situations. One of the conference chairs noted that my approach of including Jungian and Lacanian philosophy to explore shadowing in Pixar’s film was ‘unique’ at this conference and it was well received by the panel. I was subsequently invited by the event organisers to write up my paper for an edited collection on *Toy Story* for Bloomsbury.

The book itself is a collection of essays exploring themes, techniques, culture and industry relating to Pixar’s first feature film, and includes music, aesthetics, toys as commodity culture and ideas of growing up alongside the film.

After my in-depth study of identity, self and difference in my monograph, I was struck by Pixar’s attention to detail and their ability to address a wide audience through often uncompromising themes in their cinema. My chapter focused on the subtle and overt fragmentations that occur in *Toy Story*. I focused on the shine of the CG surfaces that

create the world, and on its shadows, of alternate worlds and doppelganger characters, that may occupy our periphery vision. The editors commented that they found my chapter to be “insightful and [that it] adds distinctively to the book as a whole. We came away persuaded that doubling is an important presence in the film”. The revisions they suggested were to reduce the amount of research I had included on shadows and doubling, to streamline the work and allow more emphasis on the themes in *Toy Story*. I found the feedback to be helpful and constructive and was able to write a further draft that addressed this. The psychoanalytic approach I adopted at the time had not been overtly discussed in previously published articles on Pixar or *Toy Story*. More recently, Professor of Arts and Cultural Studies, Lilian Monk Rösing has published *Pixar with Lacan: The Hysteric’s Guide to Animation* (2017), focusing on the psychoanalytic implications of the movies. My approach, and later Rösing’s, highlights the importance of viewing animated film through a wider lens, in addition to its historical and technological contexts.

Identity, through mirroring of different notions and realisations of selfhood, othering and doubling, pervades *Toy Story* and these themes resonate through my published chapter:

Within Andy’s seemingly harmless, happy world, we can find glimpses of duality, absence and voids. Mirrors serve as gateways, offering versions of images (particularly the ‘self’) that may be contested and otherness that needs closer inspection (Batkin, 2018, 156).

My reading of the film through the mirroring of identities of self and place, situates it not only within animation studies but also within the wider context of sociology and the humanities.

### Impact

Bloomsbury published the edited book in January 2018. University libraries housing the book include the University of Warwick, Oxford Brookes University, The University of Bonn, the IE Library of Madrid, Boston University Libraries, Harvard College Library, Yale University Library, New York University, NYU Shanghai and University of Queensland. My chapter has also been featured on screen studies.com, which platforms what it considers ‘an exceptional collection’ of content from Bloomsbury and Faber & Faber for academics and students to access.

*Toy Story: How Pixar Reinvented the Animated Feature* has been reviewed by scholars in and around the field of animation studies, notably J P Telotte, Professor of Film and Media Studies at Georgia Institute of Technology, U.S. (see Appendix B). Telotte commented on the cultural value of the volume, as an addition to the scholarship of animation studies and touches on the importance of the collection:

*Toy Story* the volume, like *Toy Story* the movie, offers many pleasures. Its discussions of Pixar’s expressive textures, of the new animator as a kind of puppet master, of the cultural meanings of toys, and of the value, even subtlety possible in computer animation are both intellectually satisfying and welcome additions to animation scholarship. But many of these contributions also come with a clearly felt, almost emotional appreciation for what is demonstrably a great film and a testimony to what animation can accomplish. This book fully appreciates that film and, in turn, deserves to be appreciated. (Editorial Review, Bloomsbury)

Richard McCulloch, Lecturer in Film and Cultural Studies at the University of Huddersfield, writes about the emphasis of the collected essays on *Toy Story*’s innovation:

By positioning it in relation to diverse continuities and changes in filmmaking, animation, storytelling, music and art, ultimately the book serves as a kaleidoscopic exploration of the movie’s enduring resonance and influence.

Bloomsbury emphasise the importance and originality of the collection, as being “the first substantial work” on the film (2018).

### **‘Voice and Violence: The Animated Child in Post-9/11 Disney and Pixar Cinema’**

In late 2017, Editors Dr Christianne Rinck, Undergraduate Director of Humanities and Cultural Studies, and Heidi Kramer, of the University of Southern Florida issued a call for papers for what sounded like a unique collection on the relationship between 9/11 and Disney Pixar:

The medium of animation uses intertextuality, music, etc. to distract viewers from violent content; hence, laughter replaces concern for those in danger. Tortured and tormented characters, often the Other, stand outside the frames of recognition for humanness; further, the films sometimes define children themselves as threats and dangers. While most generally excuse the violence as "only" cartoon slap-stick, Disney reigns in children's entertainment globally and its views are far reaching. Animated portraits of a state industry for profit, nationalism, and militarism that culminates in torture "naturalize" violent tactics, making them seem normal if not inevitable. It could be argued that these representations of violence are simply computer-generated images flashing on the screen and are not "real" people enduring these atrocities; on the other hand, it could be argued that this animated torture amid profit, militarism, and surveillance, "condoned" in post 9/11 discourses, communicates that these ideologies are acceptable (Rinck, 2017).

The proposed collection appeared to broach new and important ground about animation’s ability to both deflect and accept issues of violence in society through notions of the medium as the not-real, and also to be able to act as a powerful emitter of these messages. The unlikely placing of animation within the controversial setting of the



U.S. terror attacks of 9/11 had not been attempted for an edited collection and I believe that the publication will prove a challenging and significant body of work within animation and wider political, cultural and sociological fields, upon its release. Perhaps because of the nature of the book's controversial topic, the editors received multiple notes of interest from various U.S. publishers, from academic presses and trade presses alike. They opted for the University of Nebraska Press because of "their reputation in American cultural criticism" as well as their attention to international marketing of their publications (Rinck, 2018). The collection has been thoroughly peer reviewed and is currently in production with UNP.

My chapter 'Voice and Violence: The Animated Child in Post-9/11 Disney and Pixar Cinema', which is included within this PhD submission, focuses on the identity of the animated child and how it might be seen as transforming from a passive to an aggressive Self before, during and after the terrorist acts of the turn of the century and how, subsequently, the Self may be relegated to the Other. I incorporated my research into identity studies as well as the theories on childhood by Wyness (200, 6), who suggests that children no longer knowing their place, and Grimm (1994, 116), who attests that children are living in a world of violence, surrounded by violence. My chapter applied these ideas to animated characters such as Boo, Lilo and Stitch, Dash and Jack-Jack, framed against the violent backdrop of 9/11. I saw animation as addressing the era in a fascinating and unique way:

We saw a new child emerging from the rubble of this crisis, shrugging off its apocalyptic heritage and stepping sharply into focus. The child was Boo, fearless in the face of monsters, it was Lilo and Stitch, anarchic and unafraid, it was baby Jack Jack, ignited by fire and delighted by danger. It had an appetite for violence as it struggled to cast off the myth of childhood and became resilient and vibrant, yet, conversely, alien and invisible. (Batkin, 2019)

I applied themes of otherness as well as how the animated child views itself, and its environment. Identity politics within animation against the backdrop of 9/11 became an important discussion and I found this topic fascinating and fruitful. Applying such contentious themes to animation felt rewarding, challenging and original.

### Impact

The editors' feedback on my chapter was extremely positive (see Appendix C). They commented, "this is a beautiful essay and it is vital the world see it, so it's wonderful you sent it; not enough work has been done in this regard" (Rinck and Kramer, 2018). The editors also highlighted a particular section of my essay as contributing towards a new discourse about Disney and 9/11:

Animation in the U.S decodes messages of childhood and offers layered representations that are mirrors and drivers of society. If we return to Grimm's comment about how the world involves children in violence, we can begin to see how Disney and Pixar address these themes. (Batkin, 2019)

My chapter offers a broader scholarly contribution towards the field of both animation studies and sociological and political studies, through the lens of childhood identity – specifically selfhood and the Othering of the animated child, which tie in with my body of work for this PhD. In focusing on the figure of the child, I address selfhood within the toon as an individual, which reiterates Young's earlier remark about the originality of this research (see page 60).

To return to the notion of the real and the not-real in animation, I found that my studies into identities of animated childhood during the era of 9/11 focused on the vibrancy, the voice and violence of the child; nowhere else in my studies have I experienced such an extreme distancing of the artificiality of the animated form – "the Disney Pixar child in

this era is a flash of colour and a force of nature, unstoppable, uncanny and, despite its elusiveness, very *present*” (Batkin, 2019). The child is real, complex, suffering yet defiant, but it is as yet largely untapped and certainly warrants further investigation within the fields of identity politics and animation studies.

This chapter offers insights into how animation studies can lead to intersectional crossovers with other disciplines and how the medium itself can be viewed from a different angle. I believe that the collection will gain an important and wide readership after its publication because of its originality. *The Grimm Mouse* collection should reach an international audience, thus further accentuating its significance.

In addition, having explored the animated child for this publication, my interest in the subject matter has subsequently developed and I am hoping to propose a monograph on this in 2020/21, and will be approaching Routledge publishers with an outline of my idea. As is evidenced by my collection of work, a later piece that I include for this PhD is a study on childhood in *Coraline*, which grew out of this initial fascinating project that I collaborated on with the scholars at the University of Southern Florida.

### **‘A Darker Heartland – A study of Otherness, Dysfunction and the Uncanny in Aardman’s Animated Short Films’**

In late 2017, I read a call for papers for an edited collection on Aardman. I had previously included a chapter on Wallace and Gromit for my own monograph *Identity in*

*Animation*, entitled ‘The Case for Wallace and Gromit: Britishness, Slapstick, Horror and the Real’ (2017), which highlighted Nick Park’s knowledge of horror cinema as being a useful device for ‘play’ within his canon of work, as well as exploring the themes of family identities and difference in the films. I wrote a proposal for the editor, Bella Honess Roe who had stipulated in her call for papers that contributors should avoid the ‘obvious angles’ as they had already been covered, and thus her intention was to create an original collection of essays that would add to the field in a more innovative way. My idea was to focus on the Othering that occurs in Aardman’s short films, *Stagefright* (Box, 1997), *Babylon* (Lord and Sproxtton, 1986), *Going Equipped* (Lord, 1990) and *The Pearce Sisters* (Cook, 2007) and the idea of nostalgia and what it means within Aardman, and the editor accepted my proposal, commenting that she was interested in reading about the lesser known short films I mentioned.

Peter Lord called Wallace and Gromit the studio’s “heartland” (2007), with the duo and their films being embedded in national culture and its nostalgia and I decided to frame the word ‘heartland’ in a different way that ran counter to this. My chapter focused on the “less familiar films and their surreal terrains of otherness and isolation” (Batkin, 2019). Returning to the theme of identity, I argued that here “Self is suppressed and otherness emerges with the uncanny to create a distinctly darker heartland”. Applying Freud’s theories of home as a contestable place, I discussed Thatcher’s crime-ridden Britain, the apocalypse, a darkened theatre and a remote island, and created a tapestry upon which to locate themes of isolation, dysfunction and violence as I studied these four lesser-known films of the studio.

Within my overall topic of identity in animation, I find that my chapter on Aardman certainly presents a darker heartland within my collection of work for this PhD. Identity remains a core driver for this particular essay, but it is within its Othering that the focus lies and the loss or contesting of Self points to the space that opens up in the shadows that is occupied by frightful characters and ideas. Stop motion becomes a tool here for accentuating horror and the grotesque in *Stagefright*, whilst in *The Pearce Sisters* the 2D scratchy and blotted backdrop of the film hints at an uncivilized, unsanitary wasteland upon which the darkest deeds are executed by two strange, doppelgänger siblings. Simultaneously, I found that I returned again to the theme of Place and its significance in tying together selfhoods and character longings for another world, as in my other pieces for this PhD. Place in Aardman's short films works to intensify the situations of characters and their plights.

### Impact

After my first draft, the editor commented that she was drawn to the dark nostalgia of the films and asked if this could be amplified, however she then revised this view (it is a theme that I returned to in my later chapter on Snow White) and asked if I could re-work the chapter to focus on the darkness, and more on the isolation and violence hinted at in these short films. After receiving my revised chapter, the editor praised its fresh ideas of home, place, identity and darkness and “the way they present place and home as unfamiliar, other”, and how this “runs counter to the Aardman oeuvre (warm homeliness and nostalgic comfort)” (Honesty Roe, 2018).

Initially, the edited collection was contracted with I B Tauris, and will now be published by Bloomsbury due to their acquisition of the same. The collection, featuring my chapter on Aardman's darker heartlands, is expected to be published in February 2020.

The editor commented that what I was writing about was valuable because it ran counter to how Aardman's work is typically perceived. With the wealth of published work on Wallace and Gromit, by authors such as Esther Leslie and Barry Purves, my focus on the violence, isolation and dysfunctionality of *Stagefright*, *Babylon* and *The Pearce Sisters* offers a very different perspective of the studio's work. I place *Babylon* within the highly charged political context of the 1980s, along with the short film *Going Equipped*, about an ex-convict who reflects on his crimes and on the prison system. My study of *Stagefright* is about the victimisation and Othering of its central character, whilst *The Pearce Sisters* focuses on the "fish and men-gutting" (Batkin, 2018) that two sisters enjoy on an isolated island. At the heart of my focus is the isolation felt by characters, leading to dysfunction and violence; the theme of Difference again runs through this study and relates closely to my other work for this PhD. The more I explored identity in animation, the more I found myself edging over into the darker themes that involved the Othering of characters and places. This interest began with my chapter on Wallace and Gromit, focusing on the somnambulism that occurs in *The Wrong Trousers* when Wallace sleepwalks up the side of the building, and it continued into my chapter on Adam Elliot's stop motion misfits and the stigma that surrounds them. Animation allows such darkness to permeate the ordinary, creating stories that challenge preconceptions of acceptable behaviour and attitudes. In order for family and 'Self' to be established, cinema offers visions of otherness to illustrate what is unfamiliar and strange. I have followed this thread through my work, and have found that animation pushes Difference

in extreme and vibrant ways whilst often refuting it, however in Aardman's short alternative films, otherness boldly announces itself as such and retains its darkness. There is no cosy, comfortable resolution in any of these films, arguably forcing the audience to question identity at a deeper level.

Identity within animation is at the core of my exploration for this chapter and within 'A Darker Heartland' it is suppressed, warped, dysfunctional and violent, yet these traits somehow create an identity that feels more real, more vibrant and more charged with life.

### **'The Wandering Child and Family in Crisis in Henry Selick's *Coraline*'**

In 2018, I was approached by Dr Mihaela Mihailova, Post Doctoral Fellow at the University of Michigan, and member of the Society of Animation Studies Board, to ask if I would contribute to an edited collection on *Coraline*. Dr Mihaelova had discussed potential contributors with Dr Pallant, another member of the SAS Board, who had reviewed my monograph in 2017 and who suggested my name to her. The collection, and my chapter within it, has been contracted by Bloomsbury, New York, and is expected to be published in 2020. As with *The Grimm Mouse* collection, this book has U.S origins and will achieve international publication. The editor has given me useful feedback on my first two drafts, and I have accentuated the themes of family and childhood as these were the threads that she found very compelling and had urged me to discuss further.

My chapter focuses on childhood identity, the breakdown of the family unit, and the wandering that subsequently occurs, in the real and imaginary worlds. Within this study, I ask where exactly Coraline fits in: “childhood has become a site of contention, both in terms of its identity and the way in which children play, inside and outside the home” (Batkin, 2019). I explore the magical realm and what it means for Coraline, who is invisible in the real world: “within the breakdown of the family unit, lies a dark sort of difference. As identities as fixed things become contested, otherness creeps inside and begins to tear at the fabric of life” (ibid). The significance of Place links this work with my other pieces, along with the Othering of characters, sociological issues that pervade the narrative and the subsequent struggle of the animated child to find its place in the world.

### Impact

This chapter continues the themes I have explored in my other pieces for this collection. The approach within this particular chapter is to explore the film through the lens of the real to expose identities in crisis. By applying identity studies and, in particular, the theme of displacement in *Coraline*, I offer an insight into Self and difference and how animation is able to refute its artificiality, allowing the reader to view the film’s themes and issues as ‘real’. Other published articles on the film have focused on comparisons with Gaiman’s original story, as well as applying Freudian theories of the home, and the othering of the Bedlam, as my chapter illustrates. My own chapter explores childhood studies and the family unit, to explore what identity means and how the child adapts and overcomes the crises that arise, how belonging is contested and how wandering is inevitable within modern culture.



The editor, upon reading my second draft, has commented that this chapter will lend a “fantastic, unexplored perspective to the book” (see Appendix E) and is particularly interested in my attention to the theme of the wandering and displaced child in today’s society and how I relate this to Selick’s film.

In line with my other pieces of writing for this PhD, my focus on *Coraline* is a sociological and psychoanalytical one. I use identity politics to create a framework for my argument, that the twenty-first-century family has either evolved or broken, depending on one’s viewpoint, and I discuss the impact that this has had on the child, as well as dissecting different notions of ‘play’ that children engage in today. With Self in crisis, the child becomes invisible and is prone to wander, across landscapes and dimensions, without parental protection or support. The animated child, in line with my earlier argument about voice and violence in the post-9/11 world, has become adept at wandering, and at survival. Its identity has evolved to create a new sort of figure that is both vibrant yet alienated and it warrants far deeper investigation than it has received thus far within animation studies.

### **‘Framing Snow White: Preservation, Nostalgia and the American Way in the 1930s’**

In late 2017, Dr Christopher Holliday, Liberal Arts Early Career Development Fellow in Film Studies at Kings College, London, and Dr Chris Pallant, Reader in Media, Art and

Design at Canterbury Christ Church University, issued a call for papers for a *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* edited collection. I submitted a proposal to the editors based on my interests in cultural identity and how animated film may be framed within this discussion. My proposal ‘Framing Snow White: Preservation, Nostalgia and the American Way in the 1930s’ was accepted in January 2018 and I wrote a first draft by August of that year. This has been accepted by the editors and is under contract to be published by Bloomsbury in 2020.

My chapter explores the power of the past and the nostalgic framework that forms the structure of American thought for culture, society, politics and philosophy, and applies these ideologies to the film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. I see Disney’s first feature as being able to capture an entire decade’s concerns and being able to frame the 1930s within its animated landscape. Identity of a nation, from selfhood to collectivism, to politics and society, is at the core of my piece and I focus on Disney’s response to the Great Depression and the role that cinema played in shaping the era:

Within the dusty, drought-ridden landscape of a shocked and struggling nation, and amid snapshot faces of hungry, destitute families, Disney captured a critical moment of American history and presented its own solution to the American ‘problem’: collectivism, hard work, and, above all, preservation of the Past. (Batkin, 2018)

### Impact

The editors commented, on my first draft: “this is a really strong chapter that gets into some rich detail about the film’s American context and issues of nostalgia” and added: “you’ve given some excellent detailing throughout as to the presence of markers in the film that aid your interpretation” (see Appendix F). They asked me to further emphasise

the Americanness and the reflecting on the stakes today for reading the film in this historical context, for my second draft, and the editors have now asked for some very minimal amendments, advising me that the chapter will then be ready for final submission.

In line with my other pieces within this PhD by Published Work, at the core of my study is how identity shapes and is shaped by animation, and how the ‘real’ and the artificial are contested within these studies, and the fundamental journey that animation takes through culture, self, nationhood and nostalgia to find itself and to make its impact. This is particularly prevalent within this chapter and it challenges preconceptions about the film’s own identity, just as it refutes the idea that *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is merely a cartoon based on a European folktale about a princess hiding from her wicked stepmother in the forest.

My study of identity within this final piece of work for this PhD is perhaps the most challenging chapter I have written in terms of its broad reach into culture and the past, and how, as a whole, it frames a classic animation feature within such a turbulent era of American life. Identity within this particular piece refers to nationhood and collectivism, to the rejection of Self, and to the film itself as an important artefact to be dissected and disseminated for its themes that mirror a certain point in American history. I feel that this chapter is a poignant end to my journey through this PhD body of work, as I am ending at the beginning. *Snow White*’s impact on global cinema was astonishing, and the film continues to be a crucial piece of Americana today, 82 years after its release. Indeed, animation’s ability to represent an entire era of history, and to simultaneously enchant its

viewers and connect with them on many levels, supports my view that it is through the layers of identity politics that animation makes the most remarkable steps.

## Conclusion

Within the darkened cinema, the screen flickers and the film comes to life. In animation, characters and their worlds engage the audience just as live-action actors and worlds do. The parallel between the two media above has always existed and often been traversed between, from the epic journey made by Georges Méliès from the real into the lunar wonderland, to live-action Alice's adventures in the realm of the fantastic. Animation exists in the real, the real exists in animation. The only significant differences between the two are that the animated toon is created by an omnipotent artist's hand and the action of the animated film has already occurred by the time it is caught on camera. Time lapses, loops, and plays tricks on us. It makes us wonder how the toon can achieve life, when it is but an artificial 'thing', a flat drawing or painting, a lump of clay, a bunch of pixels. The notion of the 'real' has been contested throughout history and continues into the present, yet animation attracts such close attention from critics, theorists and audiences. In the 1930s, the medium came under attack from audience members (which then attracted the attention of the Hays Production Code Board of censors), who believed that Micky Mouse needed to behave a little more responsibly, and that Betty Boop was far too sexual. If animation was just an artificial construct, why did the censors care quite so much?

They cared because the animator has always breathed life into the inanimate, achieving a god-like status over the toon, moving it closer to the real, to the spark of life, allowing connections to be made and the toon to live as an alternative version of the real. Identity is at the core of this animated character; through ideas of Self, it expresses views and beliefs just as any actor does. It acknowledges its world and seeks to find its place

therein, it recognizes others that are like it, just as it recognizes those who are not. Difference becomes a catalyst for villains in some animated worlds and for heroes in others. It is dissected, exaggerated, played with and often contested in animation in a way that it is not in live-action. Culture also deeply informs the character: the Looney Tunes attacked Hollywood, the studio system and their lack of critical praise, while Disney assimilated artists' work in order to promote a collectivist identity in 1930s America. Miyazaki rejected modern society in favour of a traditional Japan where family and respect were the predominant values, and Elliot concerned himself with the migration of a people over vast land and seascapes. Animation uses identity to embed important ideologies within its cinema, just as live-action film does, but because of its fixation with creating life out of the inanimate (or the 'dead' object), identity is tested, accentuated, exaggerated and pushed further here than it is elsewhere. Identity politics enable animation to attain a sense of the 'real', through characters' selfhood or othering, the establishing or erasure of place and through nationhood and, often, its rejection.

My approach for this PhD body of work has been through the lens of the real. The question of verisimilitude recurs throughout my work, and is addressed within this review; I have explored, in my publications, how animated characters undertake "endless hungry quests for identities" (Batkin, 2017, 171) and how this allows truths to materialise, through personhoods that are psychologically enriched. The reader of this study is asked to consider identity in the animated character and their world as a complex, sophisticated device of enabling the 'real', and this approach to the body of work, which includes research into such themes, textual analysis of theories and primary interviews, contributes to knowledge in an original way.

The other significant and recurrent themes, present within the work as a whole, focus on the juxtapositions that occur within identity and animation. Through my analysis of Self and Other, I have discovered the fracturing that occurs and the darker themes that emerge, with particular emphasis on the shadow and doppelgänger, and this analysis can be found throughout my work. There is a constant, fascinating duality of Self that is discussed as either pronounced or lurking on the periphery within these publications, and this theme is dissected to reveal important fracture lines within the toon's personhood. The juxtapositions observed, extend to place and its absence in the cartoon world, as well as family and isolation, all of which emphasize the character's crisis of identity and offers this as 'real'. This enables a rich, original reading of identity in animation to take place and informs the reader on a psychoanalytic level.

Within my body of work, I have applied sociological and cultural studies as well as national politics to establish both the sophisticated layers of complexity that identity points to within animation itself and to argue for animation's justification as an important medium in its own right. My emphasis has focused predominantly on animated characters, such as Bugs, Daffy, WALL-E, Coraline, Max, Chihiro and Gromit, and I have applied identity politics to them to understand how their personalities are formed and how they challenge preconceptions of the toon as merely an artificial 'thing'. I have also studied the identity of the studio system and the independent, as well as gender issues within animation and the industry to give me a frame of reference for my argument, and my interviews with both male and female artists and directors have helped inform my journey through identity in animation. I have discovered from these interviews that, regardless of the medium of animation used, every artist cares about the identity of their animated characters and worlds, of the themes and messages the films

wanted to convey and of the frustrations that identity politics raise. Many of them reiterated Chuck Jones' earlier view, that these characters were able to exist in any space, regardless of the world or the background. Identity is tested and exaggerated more so in animation, and it enables the real, through the themes that I have explored. This focus has led to a unique approach to the characters and worlds discussed; animation's malleability culminates in a fascinating dissection of character traits through this lens and, despite the changeable and uncertain terrain of the animated world in question, selfhood and difference remain focal points. Place itself is a marker for uncertainty, yet it accentuates the narratives and identities that play out within it.

Within my initial study, I discovered that Bugs can exist outside the frame and cannot be contained within it; I also explored his depth of selfhood and his control of others. I went on to a focus of identity and what it means in animation within my monograph, through themes of Self, difference, culture and the animated body. Here I explored the self-awareness of the animated toon, from Betty Boop's knowing winks to camera, to Daffy's frustration that he must always play the dupe, to Gromit's awareness of his silent hero status and WALL-E's identity as lone guardian of earth, with a penchant for nostalgia. Within this journey I discovered how important culture, politics and place are to establishing identities in animation and how much further these ideologies are developed in animated spaces. White outs often occur; they are evident in the Looney Tunes canon of work and, whilst Wallace and Gromit represent the defenders of their homeland, their creators recognise that the duo can exist anywhere. Gender identities are fascinating in animation, and I explored these too in my monograph, particularly the animated body,



the 'female' question and different ideas of Self, on and off screen in animation, and the obsession with cross dressing that has always been present in animated cinema.

Difference became a dominant theme within my body of work, beginning with my studies of the Betty Boop villains and continuing through the stop motion worlds of Nick Park and Adam Elliot, wherein I dissected what otherness was and how it became a useful device in animation. This continued on, into my chapter in the *Toy Story* collection, wherein I studied how selves were fractured and found that a curious mirroring occurred in the film, allowing the 'shadow' to flourish. This theme resonated with me and I applied it to my next piece of writing on Aardman's short animated films, finding that, counter to the cosy heartland of Wallace and Gromit, there was a darker heartland running through the studio's outputs. Self and the othering of characters led me to my piece on 9/11 and the Disney Pixar child, where I disseminated meanings of identities in a turbulent era and how voice and violence came to represent the animated child. Identity and the child continued into my chapter on Coraline, and how its place in society became contested, leading to its search for belonging that was never quite fulfilled. Finally, I came full circle in my body of work, to the place where Disney feature animation began. Within my study of *Snow White* I framed the film within the context of The Great Depression of the 1930s and found its contents reflected there; the film seemed to hold the solution of what America should do, pointing to both identity, in and of animation, and arguing for its significance within the wider arena of sociology, politics and humanities.

At the start of my journey I asked these questions:

If there is no physical presence, what happens to self? If there are no boundaries, what of otherness? If binary codes need not apply, what defines the individual? If place is both present and absent, where does the Toon stand? (Batkin, 2017, 6)

Identity asks important questions of animation and these, in turn, are answered by representations within animation. This has been my focus and it is evidenced by this body of work, both individually and as a whole.

The malleability of identity reflects that of animation, allowing a fascinating relationship to flourish, one that cuts across gender stereotypes and undercuts preconceived ideas of characters and narratives. Identity and animation use themes of Difference, Culture and Place as markers of recognition that illuminate the importance of the connections made and, ultimately, of the potential of the medium to break down barriers and tread new ground.

Animation is electrifying, mesmeric and all-powerful. The inanimate objects on the screen flicker and come to life before our eyes in a hypnotic display that demands our attention, and yet as figures morph and perform impossible feats in the darkened theatre, they simultaneously have the ability to present important, challenging perceptions of identity and all its politics. Animation and identity merge together. They fuse, and the current that runs between them is charged with life; it sparks and forks out to touch Place, Culture, Difference, Self, and, when the film has ended, we can recall the Toon and how it connected and spoke to us through this ever-evolving medium.

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# **Appendices**

## **A-F**



# Appendix A

## Reviews for *Identity in Animation*

### A.1

Sample Chapters Reviewed on book proposal – arranged by Routledge:



### Book Proposal Reviewer Questionnaire

*Identity in Animation* – 2 sample chapters

(Jane Batkin)

#### READER 1:

1. Overall Reaction: What is your general reaction to this book?

- a) Do you find any of the features of the text particularly appealing? Is the book based on any assumptions with which you agree? Disagree? Please explain.

The proposal is appealing. The author works hard to bring in production context alongside detailed textual analysis and broader social commentary – these are methodological approaches that I firmly believe in. A positive outcome should this book make publication would be a reclaiming of history for those individuals who worked beneath the headline studio names (such as Disney), bringing with it a wider recognition for the contributions of those artists and animators who created the animated characters that we identify so strongly with.

- b) Do you think the author(s) is suitably qualified for this project?

Yes. From the CV supplied, the competence with which this proposal has been put together, and from the chapter samples provided, I believe the author is well qualified to deliver this project in a rigorously researched and well-written fashion.

2. Competing Books: Do you agree with the assessment of competing titles?

Yes – those included. However, I think that the author could have included more texts. As it stands, it paints a rather misleading picture of the ‘limited’ range of extant studies in this area – in actual fact, the range of animation scholarship now available is considerable. This does not discount the relevance that this study would make should it be published. As I have suggested in proposal document, this study will compliment the existing literature to good effect and secure a strong readership.

3. Individual Chapters: Please comment on the strengths and weaknesses of each chapter.

I have included comments in the proposal. In short, the sample chapters are written in an engaging fashion. The referencing style is unobtrusive, but can feel a little light in places – perhaps the author could bring in more footnotes/endnotes in order to provide sufficient scholarly reflection, without compromising rhythm of the writing. The division of material within the sample chapters works well.

5. Writing Style and Level: Is the writing style and the reading level satisfactory and appropriate for the market?

Yes.

Audience/ Market

6. Who do you consider to be the primary audience for the book? The secondary audience?

The author has worked hard to research their potential audiences in the proposal and I agree with the author's assertions with regards to HE providing a strong readership. I'm not convinced that this book will secure a FE readership. I think the author will struggle to engage with readerships outside of the US/UK as it currently stands – if the book were to be expanded (as discussed above) there might be more scope to anticipate a wider take up.

7. Would this book have international appeal?

As discussed above. US/UK appeal is likely.

#### Recommendation

8. Based on your comments above, please choose one of the following. For any choice you make, please briefly summarize your overall impressions and the primary recommendations for improving the book (or why you feel it should not be signed).

- a) *I recommend this book for publication, but only if revisions are made.*

The revisions/decisions discussed above (section 3) need to be considered carefully by the author (and commissioning editor). It is this reviewer's opinion that expansion of the book is required. Two further chapters (Euro/Aardman...) and (Australia/Elliott...) would bring greater balance to the work as a whole (in terms of animation styles/national contexts) and might also reposition the book to take advantage of a wider international readership.

#### READER 2:

1. Overall Reaction: What is your general reaction to this book?

Do you find any of the features of the text particularly appealing? Is the book based on any assumptions with which you agree? Disagree? Please explain.

Do you think the author(s) is suitably qualified for this project?

I find the historical context and analysis of the films engaging and novel; the Betty Boop analysis in Chapter 1 (provided as a sample) is comprehensive and historically grounded. Some of the suppositions regarding Looney Tunes are not necessarily historically substantiated; while I agree that "What's Opera, Doc?" is a groundbreaking work of animation, the author does manage to gloss over the fact that the cartoon is still supposed to be a funny take-down of some of the tropes of high art, which I agree contributes to the overall stylistic achievement of the short film in questions. I would encourage the author to emphasize the importance and centrality of comedy to Warner Bros. cartoons.

2. Competing Books: Do you agree with the assessment of competing titles?

I do largely agree with the assessment of competing volumes, although I find it strange that Donald Crafton's essay in *Reading the Rabbit* is extensively cited, but not his two books, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928* (1993) and the recent (2012) *Shadow of a Mouse: Performance, Belief, and World-Making in Animation*. The latter certainly has many overlaps in the material and historical periods covered, and I believe the author's argument would be strengthened by referencing this volume as well.

3. Organization/Coverage: Have all of the topics you find necessary in this type of book been covered? Are there any topics you feel that should be relocated, removed, or added?

4. Individual Chapters: Please comment on the strengths and weaknesses of each chapter.

The early period in American animation has been well-covered, and given the author's stated intent to re-examine these characters and films through a new lens, I question the inclusion of Miyazaki in this text (chapter 5). This is not to say that Miyazaki's films certainly wouldn't benefit from the author's approach, but it is unclear in the author's methodology why exactly he has been included in a volume largely about Western animation. This would need to be made explicitly clear, again, likely in an Introductory chapter that situates the chapters in the context of the book and its arguments.

I have no issue with the opening chapters (1-4), they are each unique enough and have structured and logical arguments in the context of the framework of the book as a whole.

5. Writing Style and Level: Is the writing style and the reading level satisfactory and appropriate for the market?

I believe the writing style and level are appropriate for the proposed undergraduate students in both theory and animation practice, and the educated general reader.

I found the analysis, barring the issues described above, to be engaging and, in many places, well-researched, even at the proposal stage.

#### Audience/ Market

6. Who do you consider to be the primary audience for the book? The secondary audience?

Primary audience: animation students (undergraduate and graduate); animation practitioners; film studies researchers; interdisciplinary researchers; film or animation historians  
Secondary audience: educated general readership

7. Would this book have international appeal?

I anticipate this book would have international appeal, given the iconic status of the primary source material in question. Assuming the inclusion of Miyazaki is more justified in this analysis of specifically Western texts, then Miyazaki's wide appeal will also benefit this volume.

#### Recommendation

8. Based on your comments above, please choose one of the following. For any choice you make, please briefly summarize your overall impressions and the primary recommendations for improving the book (or why you feel it should not be signed).

b) *I recommend this book for publication.*

I would purchase a copy for my own research use.

I would request that my university library purchase a copy.

I would adopt this book for a course I teach.

c) *I recommend this book for publication, but only if revisions are made.*

What changes would be necessary for you to recommend publication? Is a major overhaul necessary or just some minor additions and/or revision?

I recommend this book for publication, pending the minor revisions described in the above sections. Upon publication, I would likely purchase a copy for my own research use, and recommend my library purchase a copy as well.

## A.2

Michael Meindl book review: 2018, pp556-557

The Journal of Popular Culture <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.proxy.library.lincoln.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1111/jpcu.12665>

*Identity in Animation: A Journey into Self, Difference, Culture, and the Body*. Ed. Jane Batkin. Routledge, 2017. 182 pp. \$150.00 cloth. \$39.95 paperback.

Jane Batkin provides an interesting survey of the issue of identity in animated films. Batkin offers a text that is crucial at a time when the field of animation studies is growing by leaps and bounds and the use of digital technologies pushes the boundaries of what is considered animation. The book explores the creation of identity and identity politics, which, according to the author, “refers to the bringing together of characters who have a shared identity, as well as those marginalized for their ‘difference’” (2). Beyond looking at the characters within the animated films, Batkin shows how these characters “share identity” with characters in other films, as well as with people within the real world. Because she often focuses on how the characters’ identities are tied to the times in which they were created, it makes sense that Batkin structures her book in a roughly chronological order. This helps to see both the progress films have made in terms of representing various identities, as well as those areas where we may hope to see further change.

Batkin opens with a chapter on Betty Boop and her development in the 1930s. In this chapter, Batkin sets up one of her main through lines, which is tied to such scholars as Judith Butler: identity can be seen as something done, or performed, rather than something that we have. She explores how Betty Boop presents the more liberated flapper persona through “self-aware performance and playfulness” (13).

She continues by looking at how Boop resists and plays with objectification. By the end, however, Batkin shows how censorship created a character “devoid of flapper identity” and one that instead takes on the role of “maternal mother” (22).

Batkin’s next two chapters set up a contrast between Disney and Warner Bros. Within Disney films, according to Batkin, characters face “social groups” and “punishment . . . when self chooses its own path, away from the social structure” (27). While Disney keeps characters within groups, Warner Bros. presents characters that break away from social groups and place, which is a key marker of identity in Batkin’s view. Indeed, she states, “Bugs . . . is the obliterator of place” (58, original emphasis).

In her fourth chapter, Batkin focuses on the stop-motion films of Nick Park’s iconic characters Wallace and Gromit. In this chapter, she tackles the concept of the “real.” Tying to Alan Ackerman, she states, “Truth in the animated object, therefore, is located next to presence, or ‘thing-ness’, and this leads to ‘self’” (69). She pays particular attention to the models’ visible fingerprints. These imprints showcase the figures’ “thing-ness,” which ties into an “identity . . . created through imperfection, and imperfection (in terms of the deliberate finish to the models) creates Britishness” (78). Beyond national identity, Batkin also explores how identity in the Wallace and Gromit films connects to the horror genre and to gender.

While briefly discussed in the previous chapter, gender becomes the focus in Chapter five. In her opening paragraphs, Batkin suggests, “Gender in animation is distorted; truths become fictions, waistlines are shrunk . . . [and] sailors wear corsets” (89). She presents a quick history of women in animated films and looks specifically at female characters in Disney films for a good portion of the chapter. She focuses on Frozen as a marker of where these characters currently stand. Batkin says that “identity politics become questioned and truths are not absolute” in the film and that “what is certainly undeniable is that the prince is repositioned at the edge of the story” (104-05). She rounds out her discussion on gender with a look at masculinity in

Popeye as well as other films.

In Chapter six, Batkin returns to stop-motion animation and analyzes the films of Adam Elliot (Harvey Krumpet and Marie and Max). This chapter focuses a lot on difference and the Other. At the heart of her discussion is the idea of “the audience longing to view ‘others,’ yet simultaneously being repulsed by the spectacle of different” (116). Reflecting on writing by Tom Gunning, she posits that Elliot’s films are a form of the “cinema of attractions.” In the end, the characters in Harvey Krumpet and Marie and Max draw attention to themselves and show that the “Other may not be as other as we imagine” (116, original emphasis).

Batkin focuses on Hayao Miyazaki and his underscoring of both place and nostalgia in his films in Chapter seven. She suggests that Miyazaki “strives . . . for narratives steeped in history and culture” (133). As with other chapters, Batkin frames a lot of her discussion in terms of national identity. She rejects the idea that his films are “stateless” (135). She also explores the concept of family and nature in this chapter.

Batkin ends her investigation with a chapter investigating how computer-generated animation (CG) plays into the creation of identity. She connects with her earlier discussions of “thing-ness” and identity being something we have or perform rather than something we “are” (154). In her discussion of *Toy Story*, she also looks at how “self is interpersonal” and how the characters’ interactions with each other create an identity that we perceive and react to (154). Batkin also brings back the concept of nostalgia in her discussion of *WALL-E*, who she compares to Charlie Chaplin. In some ways, she goes beyond the technology, which is ever-evolving, to locate identity in performance rather than style or medium. As she states, Pixar “[insists] that a soul is more valuable than the tools that created it” (161).

Batkin’s text provides a lot of great material for students and scholars of animation. Throughout her book, she mentions many of the key scholars of identity and animation, which makes the volume a good resource in exploring the foundations of this topic. Also, many of the chapters include brief excerpts from interviews she has conducted with animators, including a number of female artists. The author breaks down each chapter into smaller sections, which can make the arguments seem a little disjointed. The chapters that stand out are those focused on one (maybe two) films, such as the one centered on Adam Elliot. As mentioned earlier, this book acts as a good jumping off point for discussing animation and identity.

Michael Meindl  
Radford University

### A.3

#### *Book Review 'Animation: an interdisciplinary journal 13 (3) p 257-260*

Jane Batkin, *Identity in Animation: A Journey into Self, Difference, Culture and the Body*, London: Routledge, 2017: 192 pp.: ISBN 9781138849785, £28.99 (pbk)

**Maarten van Gageldonk** ArtEZ Academy of the Arts, The Netherlands

From the beginning of the 20th century, animation, its characters and the formation of identity have been profoundly intertwined. In addition to the live-action sequences that foregrounded the animators' roles in giving animated characters their identities [sic], successful early animation series, such as Max Fleischer's *Out of the Inkwell* (1918–1929), reflected the identities of their studios. As Mark Langer has pointed out, for example, whereas Disney broke up the animation process into various departments, which led to more balanced cartoons in terms of plot, the Fleischer Studio's more chaotic, integrated approach resulted in wilder, more heterogenic films, in which there was more room for experimentation with storylines and character development (Langer, 2011: 47). On the level of character, Paul Wells (1998: 213) has noted further that, in many animated films, the animated body is a malleable object, a form of flexibility that also carries over into character identity, which is constantly reshaped to suit a distinct setting, solve a specific problem or facilitate a particular joke. As such, studies of identity in live-action cinema (Celli, 2016; Dennison and Lim, 2006; Everett, 2005) are not easily applied to animation, in which the deliberate artificiality of the image and its movement underscore the presence of a mediating hand in representation.

Jane Batkin's insightful, if somewhat uneven, *Identity in Animation* explores this area of animation studies. The book reflects a two-pronged effort to understand how identity in animation is formed and represented on the screen, as well as how identity politics are reflected in the medium. In separate chapters devoted to individual animation characters, techniques and directors, Batkin investigates how identity in animation has developed historically. She opens with a study of Betty

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Boop, the animation character that 'epitomized the Jazz Age', as Richard Fleischer (2005: 51) has written, and provided a nostalgic remembrance of pre-1929 America from the perspective of the Depression 30s. As Batkin observes, in a relatively familiar analysis, Betty was of course a reference to the flapper, itself a highly medialized and constructed archetype that presented the female body as a site of social, cultural and political struggle. With her over-sized head and scantily clad body, she represents an oddly childish sex symbol, one that is indicative of what Laura Mulvey (1975) has identified as the preponderance of the male gaze in cinema. Betty's apparent immaturity makes her easy prey for a gamut of male predators, 'a device for chase and capture', as Batkin writes, a hunt that typically structures the narrative action of the Betty Boop shorts (p. 18). Identity-formation here is an unmistakably male act of projection, a voyeuristic act of creation that is reflective of the gender conventions of the period.

While Batkin pays relatively little attention to Disney's Silly Symphonies series, her study of Disney's supreme achievement of the 1930s, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), is revealing of how much Disney was torn between a more cartoony style redolent of the previous decade and a move towards realism. This friction resulted in a peculiar amalgam of characters done in heavy cartooning, in particular the dwarfs, and those that are depicted in a more naturalistic style, such as Snow White and Prince Charming. As Batkin observes, though, the move to more naturalistic character design also entailed a loss of clear identity. Once the cartoonish elements were discarded, Snow White became less of a character and more of an emblem for the age in which she was produced, a servile personality, whose search for a husband was intended to assuage those disturbed by the gender turmoil of the age and whose narrative of inclusivity fitted the 1930s move towards collectivism.

Batkin's discussion of Looney Tunes is particularly illuminating. While Disney aimed for family entertainment, it is often forgotten that Warner Bros. animators like Tex Avery and Chuck Jones never

intended their films to be seen by children, as Kevin S Sandler (1998: 14) has pointed out. If anything, these cartoons were subversive, choosing the side of the proletariat through their celebration of factory workers, hobos and tramps in an era of Red Scares. Batkin illustrates effectively that the adventures of Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd, Road Runner, Wile E. Coyote and others went much further: they became acts of culture jamming in their recurrent appropriation and adaptation of popular narratives, parodying the political elite and juggling with gender roles. Devoid of the wholesomeness of Disney's output, the Looney Tunes could shamelessly adapt Wagner into *What's Opera, Doc?* (1957), a film that works by virtue of the fluidity of identity in the Looney Tunes. Bugs' transformation into Brünnhilde illustrates how easily Looney Tunes characters slip into roles but at the same time do not sacrifice their own identities, a two-tier approach unique for its time that Batkin acutely analyses.

The inclusion of chapters on stop-motion animation in Nick Park's Wallace and Gromit films, as well as Adam Elliot's 'clayographies', provides a welcome addition and broadens the scope of the highly America-centric early chapters of Batkin's book. The very plasticity of clay here once more serves to stress the flexibility of identity in animation, but the visibility of the animator's fingerprints on the puppets also reifies the bond between maker and made, rendering overt the artificiality of the image we see as viewers. For Batkin, stop-motion functions as a Lacanian mirror, a representation of our other, the imperfection of which also accounts for the uncanniness we often experience when confronted with this type of animation. In this sense, it is conspicuous that the link with sculpture is not made here, since many of the observations made for stop-motion also apply to unmoving images, in particular wax statues. More specifically, it might have been more critical to bring the discussion of the Wallace and Gromit films and their representation of identity in line with the kind of criticism that *is* voiced in earlier chapters. While Batkin asserts that Nick Park's films hinge on their essential Englishness in their embrace of imperfection and self-deprecation, the fact that the disruptive Other in these films is often a woman or a distinctly foreign animal (the penguin in *The Wrong Trousers* [1993] comes to mind) is left undiscussed.

Batkin concludes with two chapters on Hayao Miyazaki's films for Studio Ghibli and the role of identity in 3D computer animation, in particular the films made by Pixar. While the Miyazaki chapter has little to offer that is new on this much-studied director, Batkin's idea that 3D animation allows for a greater level of 'thingness' than traditional 2D animation, offers interesting opportunities for discussion. From the beginnings of computer animation in the 1980s, animators have struggled to add weight, texture and presence to their characters and objects. 'There is no *there* in digital animation', Alan Louis Ackerman (2011: 3, emphasis in original) writes, an absence of space that requires a near-realistic representation of the world to make up for this deficit. Since 3D animation now dominates in the cinema, on TV and on streaming services, a broader discussion of identity in this type of animation would be a worthwhile project.

Finally, because Batkin covers a wide variety of subjects, the book profits from the use of a wide range of critical theories and places seminal animation scholarship by Suzanne Buchan and Paul Wells alongside the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin, Zygmunt Bauman and Judith Butler. It should be mentioned, though, that this array of approaches and subjects also gives the book a disjointed quality, which is exacerbated by some repetition and missed opportunities to make connections between the chapters. It would seem logical, for instance, in the chapter on Hayao Miyazaki to return to some of the observations on animation and gender made in an earlier chapter devoted to this theme because Miyazaki's films tend to feature strong female lead characters. Unfortunately, gender is only touched upon here in a short paragraph. Similarly, while Adam Elliot is namechecked in the chapter on 3D computer animation, a closer comparison between fully digital animation and his handmade claymation might have proved fruitful, especially given the focus on thingness in this final chapter of the book.

Nonetheless, it is laudable that Batkin is able to provide such a heterogenic approach to an understudied subject and the inclusion of industry interviews helps to substantiate her argumentation. The notion of identity formation in animation has been a neglected theme that is all the more noticeable given that the malleability of identity is well-suited to the medium. Animation often plays with the relation between body and identity, the fluidity of gender, as well as the realization of self and the relationship between individual and cultural memory. While these subjects have been more overtly addressed in what is often called artistic or experimental animation (one thinks of the films of Michèle Cournoyer, Joanna Priestley and the Brothers Quay, for instance), a discussion of these themes in the context of more mainstream animation is a valuable addition to animation studies.

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## Identity in animation: a journey into self, difference, culture and the body

Mikhaela E. Young

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 Published online: 07 Feb 2019.

*Identity in animation: a journey into self, difference, culture and the body*, by Jane Batkin, London and New York, Routledge, 2017, 182pp., \$43.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-138-84978-5

“Identity asks important questions of animation,” writes Jane Batkin (2017).

If there is no physical presence, what happens to self? If there are no boundaries, what of otherness? If binary codes need not apply, what defines the individual? If place is both present and absent, where does the Toon stand? (p. 6)

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Jane Batkin explores questions like these and many more in *Identity in animation: a journey into self, difference, culture and the body*. But she does so in a fresh and remarkable way: through the Toon, our cartoon hero, heroine, and villain. Batkin focuses her exploration of identity on this world of animation, and how it frames meanings for viewers, as well as for the era and culture within which each character and animator arose.

Batkin begins with 1920s Toon character Betty Boop, and with how she referenced negotiations of sexual identity within the pre-censorship era leading up to the Great Depression. Batkin illustrates how, for example, Betty Boop indexed 1920s ideas of sexual identity and, in turn, reflected and influenced negotiations of identity on a national level. In many ways, Betty Boop helped set the stage for identity confusion, a national focus on masculinity, and the morally-driven collective identity pushed by Disney in the 1930s. Toon themes of patriarchy, missing mothers, and juvenile-to-adolescent changes mirror American culture during this time; “these characters,” writes Batkin, “waged psychological wars, evoked empathy and lived both within and outside of the confines of the frame that stays with us” (p. 64). And Looney Tunes stretched what identity meant through the interrelation of cartoons and the society in which they lived.

Batkin couches this sex and gender discussion within the otherness of the female from the patriarchal vision of male identity, and she addresses looking-glass-self theory by asking, “Does a woman ever escape the looking glass” (p. 93)? Batkin thus explores the female body through Disney’s binary lens and the changes that princesses faced throughout the decades, arguing that

women did not assert their independence until the emergence of Ariel, who is curious, disobedient, and disrupts the role of the passive princess. Yet Disney still pushes patriarchal power and the need for the princess to become wife. Batkin does not give us much hope for the fate of the princess, even in her description of feminism in *Frozen*. Batkin seems to fall somewhat short in the analysis of gender and the evolution of the Disney princess, as she does not mention Merida of *Brave* or discuss other feminist themes that could be expanded upon, perhaps in a future book. I would greatly enjoy this as a much larger conversation.

Batkin reminds us about nostalgia, national identity, time, place, and nature in Hayao Miyazaki's films. Batkin argues that Miyazaki's animation mirrors the cultural identity of Japan, and forces us to come face to face with duality, and the grey complexities of good and evil. Family, gender, nature, and adolescence are celebrated, and the *other* is typically a foreign invader, yet Miyazaki's protagonists are sometimes "constructed in otherness" (p. 144), letting us know that the self is dualistic and complex, just as nature is. National culture, place, time, tradition, and nostalgia are just as much a part of identity for the Toon as they are for us.

Batkin ends her book by addressing the liveliness of animation and computer graphics animation in particular. She forces us to consider the Toon as real, having a soul, a critical player in the creation of the Self in culture and society through time. All told, *Identity in animation* provides insight into questions about identity, especially considering how animation is both art and artifact, a part of our past, but also a vision of the present in an ever-changing world. Batkin's use of historical, philosophical, psychological, and anthropological references helps guide the reader through the beginnings of animation to the present day, and encourages us to think differently about the world within animation, within the characters themselves. In the process, we re-examine neoteny, sexuality and gender, otherness, place, time, and inner life within animation, society, and our own sense of reality.

*Identity in animation: a journey into self, difference, culture and the body* will be aptly relevant in fields such as media studies, anthropology, psychology, and could easily fit within larger discussions of Self and Other in the humanities and social sciences. Batkin reminds us that animation allows us to find the Self in each of these Toon characters, onto which we project our own desires, fears, notions of differences, and needs for heroes and villains. We realize how these characters represent the intricacies of identity, self, and society. "Identities," she writes, "are complex and multifaceted and are revealed through the psychological shaping of an individual to his/her role in society," and animation gives "the message to live and to embrace one's own identity" (p. 148).

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# Appendix B

## Editorial Reviews

[barnesandnoble.com/w/toy-story-susan-smith/1126973903](https://barnesandnoble.com/w/toy-story-susan-smith/1126973903)



**Toy Story: How Pixar Reinvented the Animated Feature**  
by Susan Smith (Editor), Chris Pallant (Editor), Noel Brown (Editor), Sam Summers (Editor)

**Paperback**  
**\$39.95**

### Editorial Reviews

"Smith, Brown, and Summers' *Toy Story* examines *Toy Story* the film as a work of art, a cultural phenomenon, an industry game changer, and as beloved movie. In illuminating both how – and why – *Toy Story* is one of the most successful films of all time, this volume, like its namesake, is destined to become a classic." —Amy M Davis, *Lecturer in Film and Animation History, The University of Hull, UK*

"*Toy Story* is a remarkable film for so many reasons, but the essays collected here place particular emphasis on its fascinating (and highly successful) blending of innovation and convention. By positioning it in relation to diverse continuities and changes in filmmaking, animation, storytelling, music, and art, ultimately the book serves as a kaleidoscopic exploration of the movie's enduring resonance and influence." —Richard McCulloch, *Lecturer in Film and Cultural Studies, Centre for Participatory Culture, University of Huddersfield, UK*

"*Toy Story* the volume, like *Toy Story* the movie, offers many pleasures. Its discussions of Pixar's expressive textures, of the new animator as a kind of puppet master, of the cultural meanings of toys, and of the value, even subtlety possible in computer animation are both intellectually satisfying and welcome additions to animation scholarship. But many of these contributions also come with a clearly felt, almost emotional appreciation for what is demonstrably a great film and a testimony to what animation can accomplish. This book fully appreciates that film and, in turban, deserves to be appreciated." —J. P. Telotte, *Professor Film and Media Studies, Georgia Institute of Technology, USA*

From the Publisher

## Appendix C

### Editor's note

**SUMMARY**

108 Total 0 Insertions 0 Deletions  
0 Moves 0 Formatting 108 Comments

figment Commented  
This is a beautiful essay and it is vital the world see it, so it's wonderful you sent it; not enough work has been done in this regard. A few things, many simply for the sake of consistency, as we've asked of your colleagues as well; having said that, please let us know if you've any questions or if there are any changes you'd prefer not to make and why. It is your piece, after all. We will need all titles/subtitles to be in 12-pt. Times New Roman font, no bold, essay double-spaced. Thanks! Please see notes/make adjustments and send back when you can. -D PS please remove name as well or put on last page - we will add in later according to how the publisher wants it.

figment Commented

**Voice and Violence:**  
**The Animated Child in Post-9/11 Disney and Pixar Cinema**

Jane Batkin

Two months following 9/11, representatives of Hollywood's film industry met to discuss how cinema might best address the atrocity. Their conclusion was that American children needed to be 'reassured' (Westwell, 8), whilst at the same time Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced: 'America will need more heroes' (Faludi, 59). The film *The Spirit of America*, a montage piece directed by Chuck Workman, was subsequently circulated within classrooms. It captured 'reluctant but defiant revenge takers' and heroes such as Dirty Harry and Shane (8). The American media focused on stories of fallen heroes, such as United 93's Lou Nacker, and Jersey girl widow Patty Casazza, whose 11-year-old son asked the question that reverberated throughout the U.S and echoed Hollywood's own call for reassurance: 'who is supposed to be protecting us?' (139, 75). Within the post-9/11 landscape, the hero rhetoric developed into a dominant narrative for both adults and children, and sales of the action figure GI Joe increased by 46 per cent (Westwell, 6). The traditional assumption that children were fragile and needed protecting became replaced, in this era, with the idea that childhood, itself, was in crisis, 'because children no longer know or accept their place' (Wynes, 6). Harry Grimm, meanwhile, asserts that we live in a violent world, and that violence surrounds children now more than ever before (116).]

## Appendix D

### *A Darker Heartland: A study of Otherness, Dysfunction and the Uncanny in Aardman's Animated Short Films*

#### Editor's email



a.honessroe@surrey.ac.uk

Fri 08/06/2018 11:28

Jane Batkin



Hi Jane

Thanks for this. This all looks good to me now - I've made some minor changes in the first bit about the uncanny/ Freud just to streamline the ideas in those paragraphs. But we're now all done (bar one tiny thing - see below). Thanks for your work on this and turning the revisions around so quickly. I'm pleased with how the chapter has turned out and I hope you are too!

## Appendix E

### *The Wandering Child and Family in Crisis in Henry Selick's Coraline* Editor's email



Mihaela Mihailova <mihaela.mihailova88@gmail.com>

Mon 23/09/2019 02:45

Jane Batkin ✓



Jane Batkin - Coraline 2nd dr...

77 KB



Show all 2 attachments (1,007 KB) Download all

Save all to OneDrive – University of Lincoln

Dear Jane,

Thank you for all your work addressing my previous comments!  
I'm attaching the edits on your second draft. I'm really liking how this is shaping up. I think it'll add a fantastic, unexplored perspective to the book.

# Appendix F

## Editor's note

### CHAPTER EIGHT

#### **Framing *Snow White*: Preservation, Nostalgia and the American Way in the 1930s**

*Jane Batkin*  
*University of Lincoln*

'The Past is still with us in this land. At best, the Present is a feeble growth'<sup>1</sup>  
- Waldo Frank

If the reach of the past pervades the present, it seems to be within American culture that it is  
fully embraced, as part of the composition of life. The power of memory has seeped into U.S.

#### **Christopher Holliday**

Thank you, Jane – I think this is a really strong chapter that gets into some rich detail about the film's American context and issues of nostalgia. I've made some minor comments and suggestions along the way (nothing too huge), and thanks too for keeping to the word limit! You've probably got a couple of hundred words to play with, so take a look at the notes and see what you think.

My main notes are about emphasizing the Americanness in the introduction, and reflecting on the stakes of reading the film in this 'historical' way for how we understand *Snow White* today. You get into this in the conclusion, so more on that early on would be great. I also think a stronger emphasis on the implications of 'hiding' such values in animation could be explored – or is it plain and simple? Animation's ability to 'do' ideology or to open itself up to ideological analysis says lots about the medium itself. How much is Disney veiling such moments, and does this tell us about animation's loaded nature as a tool for ideological expression? You've given some excellent detailing throughout as to the presence of markers in the film that aid your interpretation, so perhaps you can find places in the prose where you reflect on the political stakes of your reading would strengthen the piece even more at this stage. But thanks for a stellar chapter!

